



University of
**Southern
Queensland**

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF
ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP FACTORS ON
THE VENTURE GROWTH INTENTIONS OF WOMEN
IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE
ENTERPRISES**

A Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Women's entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic development, job creation and innovation. However, women entrepreneurs, especially those in rural areas, face unique challenges that hinder their business growth. Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) is a crucial factor in influencing venture growth and success, encompassing qualities like vision, risk-taking, and the ability to inspire. Studies have shown a positive relationship between entrepreneurial and leadership competencies, emphasising the importance of integrating these dimensions. This highlights the significance of examining the impact of entrepreneurial leadership (EL) on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in rural Australia, as well as their self-perception as leaders in this context. This PhD thesis aims to address the research gap in understanding the impact of entrepreneurial leadership (EL) factors on the venture growth intentions of women in rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas of Australia. It consists of three research studies that investigate specific research questions that relate to EL identity, entrepreneurial passion, EL competencies, predictors of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and growth intentions. The study adopts a quantitative research design in alignment with a positivist paradigm, emphasising its capacity to systematically quantify and analyse the precise relationships between entrepreneurial leadership (EL) factors and growth intentions among rural women entrepreneurs in Queensland. This choice ensures a rigorous, data-driven, and objective exploration of these crucial elements within the study's empirical and scientific framework. The study employs an online survey that was distributed to women entrepreneurs in rural and regional Queensland, Australia. The collected data includes variables, such as EL identity, entrepreneurial passion, EL competencies and predictors of the TPB. Partial least squares structural equation modelling is employed to analyse the data and evaluate the complex relationships among the variables. The findings highlight a positive relationship between EL identity and growth intention and passion. Moreover, EL competency is positively associated with growth intentions. The study identifies the mediating role of various factors, including attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and EL, in the relationship between EL identity and growth intentions. These findings contribute to the understanding of women's entrepreneurship in RRR areas and have implications for policy development and interventions aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs. By developing a theoretical model for growth intentions and exploring the impact of EL factors, this study provides valuable insights to empower and foster the growth and success of rural women entrepreneurs. Although the study acknowledges limitations,

such as the cross-sectional design and the specific demographic of the sample, it opens new avenues for understanding women's entrepreneurship in RRR areas and presents a novel model for growth intentions. The practical implications of these findings support and promote women's entrepreneurship thereby driving economic development and job creation and empowering women entrepreneurs in RRR communities.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Purushottam Dhakal, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *An examination of the impact of entrepreneurial leadership factors on the venture growth intentions of women in rural, regional and remote enterprises* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes.

This thesis is the work of Purushottam Dhakal, except where otherwise acknowledged, with the majority of the contribution to the studies presented as a Thesis by Publication undertaken by the student. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Date: 2023/08/21

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Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

The research papers presented in this thesis represent a collaborative effort, with each researcher making significant contributions to the overall scientific endeavour. The specific details of the individual contributions are outlined below:

Paper 1:

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Purushottam Dhakal contributed 85% to this paper. Collectively, Retha Wiesner and Tek Maraseni contributed the remainder.

Paper 2:

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Purushottam Dhakal contributed 85% to this paper. Collectively, Retha Wiesner and Tek Maraseni contributed the remainder.

Paper 3:

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Purushottam Dhakal contributed 85% to this paper. Collectively, Retha Wiesner and Tek Maraseni contributed the remainder.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved father, Bishwo Nath Dhakal, and mother, Sabitri Dhakal.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EL	Entrepreneurial leadership
EP	Entrepreneurial passion
RQ	Research question
RRR	Rural, regional and remote
TPB	Theory of planned behaviour

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, women entrepreneurship has been recognised as a key driver of economic growth, job creation and innovation. Despite this, women entrepreneurs, particularly those in rural areas, face a range of challenges that can hinder their ability to start and grow businesses. To address these challenges, it is important to understand the factors that influence women's intentions to grow their businesses. This PhD thesis aims to examine the impact of entrepreneurial leadership (EL) factors on the venture growth intentions of women in rural, regional and remote (RRR) enterprises in Australia. The study uses three research studies, which together provide a comprehensive exploration of the role of EL in women's entrepreneurship in these contexts.

The next section of the Introduction chapter provides a background to the study, outlining the context of women's entrepreneurship and the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The problem statement for the study is then presented, followed by the main research objective and associated research questions (RQs). The significance of the study is highlighted and the methodology employed is discussed in brief. The chapter also outlines the limitations of the study and presents the overall structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background

Entrepreneurship has been recognised as a vital engine for economic development, creating new job opportunities and spurring innovation. In recent years, the role of women in entrepreneurship has gained considerable attention because they have made significant contributions to the global economy (Rosca et al. 2020). However, women's entrepreneurship, specifically, has been found to be an underused resource that can contribute significantly to economic development (Bullough et al. 2022). Women's entrepreneurship has the potential to not only benefit the economy, generate jobs and increase community prosperity but also improve the lives of women and the world at large (Foss et al. 2019). Therefore, it is essential to promote and support women entrepreneurship for societal progress (Sharma et al. 2012). Encouraging and supporting the growth of women-owned businesses is one way to provide this support. This is particularly important because women entrepreneurs face more challenges than their male counterparts (Brush et al. 2019), including access to capital and resources, especially in rural areas (Wiesner 2018b). Despite the potential benefits of women's entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs face numerous

challenges that can impede their growth and success. These challenges include limited access to financial resources, social and cultural barriers and limited access to business networks and support systems (Poon et al. 2012; Wiesner 2018b). These challenges are particularly acute in RRR areas in which women entrepreneurs face additional barriers, such as limited access to infrastructure and resources, smaller customer bases and greater distances from support networks. The context of rural women entrepreneurship is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

In recent years, EL has emerged as a crucial factor in the success of businesses (Harrison et al. 2016), particularly those led by women in rural areas. EL involves the ability to create and maintain a vision, inspire and motivate others and take calculated risks to achieve business goals (Gupta et al. 2004; Kuratko 2007; Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri 2017). Developing EL competencies among rural women entrepreneurs can help to overcome the challenges that they are facing and foster business growth. Entrepreneurial leaders in rural areas play a critical role in addressing the specific hurdles that rural businesses face (Miles & Morrison 2020). They can assist in gaining access to capital, networks and other resources that may be scarce in rural locations as well as promote and enhance the local business ecosystem by forming alliances and collaborations with other groups and mentoring and assisting other businesses (Poon et al. 2012). Therefore, EL is crucial for fostering economic development through entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas (Miles & Morrison 2020).

Women may face social and cultural biases that can undermine their confidence and limit their entrepreneurial aspirations (BarNir 2021). Social and cultural biases can hinder women's involvement in entrepreneurship by perpetuating stereotypes, limiting access to capital and networks, eroding confidence, and imposing expectations about work-life balance (Mashapure et al. 2022). In societies where women are marginalised and not expected to engage in economic activities, their opportunities for entrepreneurship and livelihood development are limited, affecting their sustainability (Bayeh 2016). However, developing an EL identity can provide a new aspect of social identity that is in accordance with their role as a leader and entrepreneur. By developing a strong sense of EL identity, women entrepreneurs can shift their focus away from their gender and towards their skills and abilities as a leader, which can boost their confidence and motivation (Tlaiss & Kauser 2019). Moreover, developing an EL identity can help women entrepreneurs to identify with other entrepreneurs and leaders (Korte 2007; Shore & Chung 2021). This identification can lead to a sense of belonging and a stronger commitment to pursuing growth opportunities (Shepherd & Haynie 2009). Women entrepreneurs who identify strongly with an entrepreneurial and leadership identity are more likely to embrace innovation, take risks and seek out growth opportunities

because they feel a sense of connection and belonging to the entrepreneurial community (Tajfel et al. 1971; Turner 1975; Fisher et al. 2017). By developing a strong EL identity, women entrepreneurs can feel a sense of responsibility towards other women entrepreneurs and the broader entrepreneurial community. This sense of responsibility can motivate women entrepreneurs to pursue growth opportunities, not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of their social group (Brewer et al. 1993; Hogg 2004).

In addition, entrepreneurial passion (EP) is a key factor that can influence venture growth. Passion is a strong and positive feeling towards a particular activity or idea and has been identified as a critical component of entrepreneurship (Cardon & Kirk 2015; Santos & Cardon 2019; de Mol et al. 2020). The concept of EP has been defined as ‘a strong affective and cognitive commitment to a business idea or venture that goes beyond the level of interest or liking’ (Cardon et al. 2013). Passion is often associated with motivation, creativity and commitment to achieving one’s goals, which are crucial elements in the growth of a business venture (Baum & Locke 2004; Roberts & Welsch 2010; Brink 2015; Drnovsek et al. 2016). Entrepreneurs who are passionate about their ventures tend to have stronger motivation and commitment to pursuing their goals and overcoming obstacles that may arise during the venture creation process (Cardon, Wincent, et al. 2009).

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB; (Ajzen 1985) is a widely used model in entrepreneurship research to investigate intentions to start or grow a business. The TPB posits that an individual’s behavioural intentions are determined by their attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms (i.e. perceptions of social pressure to perform the behaviour) and perceived behavioural control (i.e. the extent to which the individual perceives that they have control over the behaviour).

In the context of investigating the venture growth intentions of rural women entrepreneurs in Australia, the TPB could be used to explore how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control relate to intentions to grow their ventures. For example, attitudes could refer to an entrepreneur’s overall perception of venture growth as a positive or negative outcome, subjective norms could refer to the social pressure that rural women entrepreneurs face from their families, communities or business networks to grow their ventures and perceived behavioural control could refer to the entrepreneur’s sense of autonomy and control over their business decisions.

Identity theory (Stryker 1968) is a theoretical framework that proposes that a person’s sense of self comprises multiple identities that are organised hierarchically. This theory suggests that individuals’ behaviours are shaped by the identities that they hold and people strive to maintain a positive self-image by aligning their behaviours with the expectations of

their identities. However, social identity theory (Tajfel et al. 1971; Turner 1975) is a more specific form of identity theory that emphasises the importance of group membership in shaping an individual's sense of self. This theory proposes that people define themselves in terms of the social groups to which they belong and that group membership provides individuals with a sense of social identity and self-esteem. Social identity theory has been used to explain a wide range of phenomena, including intergroup conflict, stereotyping and discrimination.

Identity theory and social identity theory have implications for understanding the behaviour of entrepreneurs. For example, entrepreneurial identity theory proposes that individuals who identify as entrepreneurs are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and be successful as entrepreneurs (Radu-Lefebvre et al. 2021). Similarly, social identity theory suggests that entrepreneurs who identify with a particular social group, such as women or members of a particular ethnic group, may be more likely to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities within that group and seek out support from other members of the group (Gruber & MacMillan 2017).

1.3 Research problem

The investigation of entrepreneurial intentions has been a central focus of research in the entrepreneurship domain. Numerous studies have delved into understanding entrepreneurial intentions, specifically, in terms of business startup (eg. Franke & Lüthje 2004; Turker & Selcuk 2009; Liñán et al. 2011; Kim 2014; Mamun et al. 2017). In terms of venture growth intentions, prior studies have examined a wide range of factors that contribute to an entrepreneur's inclination for business expansion. Individual factors, including motivation, competencies and personal traits, have been identified as significant influencers of growth aspirations (Baum & Locke 2004; Aidis & Mickiewicz 2006; Hessels et al. 2008; Puente et al. 2017). Moreover, prior studies have shown that opportunity-based entrepreneurs tend to exhibit stronger venture growth intentions (Hessels et al. 2008). Environmental factors, such as government policies, social norms, role models and support networks, have also been recognised as crucial drivers of venture growth intentions (Van Stel & Storey 2004; Bosma et al. 2012). In addition, business-related factors, such as business size, ownership structure, outside investment and innovation, have been found to affect an entrepreneur's venture growth intentions (Wiklund et al. 2003; Cassar 2007; Terjesen & Szerb 2008; Uma et al. 2013).

Despite the wealth of research on entrepreneurial and venture growth intentions, there exists a significant theoretical gap concerning venture growth intentions (Costin 2012),

specifically, in the context of women entrepreneurs operating in RRR areas. Although numerous studies have explored determinants that influence entrepreneurial growth intentions, a comprehensive understanding of the unique factors that shape venture growth intentions in RRR women entrepreneurship remains limited (Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). This theoretical gap hinders the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework for venture growth intentions thus limiting the application of existing theories, such as the TPB, to fully capture the dynamics of entrepreneurship in RRR regions.

From a practical standpoint, there is a notable research gap concerning the factors that influence venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in RRR areas (Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). This gap has led to a lack of interventions that specifically address venture growth intentions while considering crucial elements, such as EL identity and competency, which are essential for promoting business growth. Understanding the role of EL identity and competency in driving venture growth intentions among women in rural areas is crucial. Such an understanding will reveal unique opportunities for fostering innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship thus encouraging the growth of women-led ventures and contributing to economic development in rural and regional areas. There is a need to better understand the role of EL identity and competency in the venture growth intentions of women in rural areas, which can offer unique opportunities for innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship, promoting the growth of women-led ventures and supporting economic development in rural and regional areas (MacKenzie 1992; Kuratko 2007). By comprehending the impact of EL factors on the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in RRR regions, targeted interventions can be developed to support gender diversity in entrepreneurship (Dean & Ford 2017). However, it is worth noting that the specific impact of EL on venture growth intentions in this context remains largely unexplored.

EL has been identified as an essential factor in the success of entrepreneurial ventures (Harrison et al. 2016). EL refers to the ability of entrepreneurs to lead and inspire others to achieve their goals. It involves a set of competencies that are related to vision, creativity, risk-taking, decision-making, communication and relationship-building (Gupta et al. 2004; Kuratko 2007; Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri 2017). Studies on entrepreneurship have traditionally focused on individual-level factors, such as attitudes, intentions and behaviours, and have not fully explored the role of leadership in entrepreneurial success. Specifically, there is a lack of research on how EL factors affect venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in RRR areas. Therefore, there is a need to examine the role of EL in predicting venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in RRR areas, specifically, in Australia.

EP has been found to be a crucial factor in the process of venture creation and development. Prior studies have shown that EP is positively associated with entrepreneurial intention (De Clercq et al. 2013; Huyghe et al. 2016; Neneh 2020). Moreover, several researchers have explored the relationship between EP and venture growth (Baum & Locke 2004; Roberts & Welsch 2010; Brink 2015; Drnovsek et al. 2016). These studies have suggested that entrepreneurs who are passionate about their ventures tend to be more innovative, persistent and proactive in pursuing growth opportunities, which, in turn, may lead to higher levels of venture growth. However, although there is existing literature that explores the relationship between EP and entrepreneurial intention, and the relationship between EP and entrepreneurial growth, the relationship between EP and venture growth intention remains an underexplored area that has no existing studies in the context of RRR women entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the potential effect of EP on the relationship between EL factors and the venture growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

The problem with limited research on venture growth intentions and EL factors for women entrepreneurs in RRR areas is that policymakers and practitioners lack a theoretical understanding of the factors that influence women's venture growth intentions in these areas. This lack of understanding limits the effectiveness of the policies and interventions designed to support women entrepreneurs in RRR areas. Therefore, there is a need for studies that explore the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in RRR areas and the impact of EL factors on these intentions.

The TPB (Ajzen 1985) has been widely used to understand entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour (Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). The TPB posits that attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are the key determinants of intentions and behaviour (Ajzen 1991). However, prior studies have suggested that the TPB alone may not be sufficient to capture the complex dynamics of entrepreneurship (Kolvereid 1996; Van Gelderen et al. 2008; Liñán & Chen 2009), specifically, in RRR areas. Thus, there is a need to integrate other factors, such as EL, into the TPB to better understand the entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour of RRR women entrepreneurs.

This research problem requires an investigation of the factors that affect rural women entrepreneurs' decision-making about business growth and the EL skills necessary for success in these challenging environments. By exploring this under-researched area, this study aims to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by rural women entrepreneurs and inform policies and programs to support their growth and success.

1.4 Aims and objectives of study

The main research objective of this study was to develop a theoretical model for venture growth intention and to examine the impact of EL factors on the venture growth intentions of women in RRR enterprises.

The following RQs and sub-RQs inform this research objective:

- RQ1: Does the ‘entrepreneurial leadership identity’ of RRR women entrepreneurs affect their intention to grow their ventures?
- RQ2: Is there a positive relationship between the entrepreneurial leader identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial passion?
- RQ3: Does entrepreneurial passion affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs?
- RQ4: Does entrepreneurial leadership identity affect the entrepreneurial leadership competencies of RRR women entrepreneurs?
- RQ5: Do EL competencies affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs?
- RQ6: How can entrepreneurial leadership identity and entrepreneurial leadership integrate into the theory of planned behaviour to predict the venture growth intentions of women in RRR Australia?
- RQ6a: Do attitudes towards the venture mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and venture growth intentions?
- RQ6b: Do the subjective norms of women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions?
- RQ6c: Does the perceived behavioural control of women entrepreneur in RRR Australia mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions?
- RQ6d: Does the entrepreneurial leadership perceived by women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions?

1.5 Link between research studies and research questions

In line with the overarching objective of this study, three distinct research studies were developed to explore specific RQs and help to explain the factors that influence the venture growth intentions of women in RRR areas.

The first study, titled ‘When entrepreneurial leadership identity and passion meet venture growth intention’, investigated the direct and indirect effects of EL identity and passion on growth intentions. This study addresses RQ1, 2 and 3, which examine the influence of EL identity and passion on the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. This study highlighted the pivotal role of entrepreneurial identity in shaping passion and growth intentions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the factors that drive venture growth among RRR women entrepreneurs.

The second study, titled ‘The interplay between entrepreneurial leadership identity, competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia’, addresses RQ4 and 5. It investigated the mediating role of EL competency in the relationship between identity and growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs. By uncovering this interplay, the study emphasised the crucial connection between identity, competency and growth intentions. The findings provide valuable insights into the influence of EL competencies on growth intentions, benefiting scholars and practitioners in the field.

To address RQ6 and its sub-questions (RQ6a, RQ6b, RQ6c, RQ6d), the third study, ‘Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs’, combined the findings from the previous studies with the TPB. This study presented a predictive model that integrates EL factors and predictors of the TPB to anticipate growth intentions. In addition, it explored the mediating roles of attitudes towards the venture, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and EL perceptions in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. By integrating these elements, the study offered a comprehensive framework for understanding and predicting the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs.

1.6 Significance of study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of the ways that EL can affect venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in RRR areas of Australia. Despite the significant economic potential of women’s entrepreneurship in RRR areas, these areas face unique challenges, such as limited resources, reduced access to markets and isolation, which can hinder the growth of women-led ventures. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence venture growth intentions is crucial for promoting and supporting women’s entrepreneurship in RRR areas, contributing to the economic development of these communities.

The findings of this study contribute to the limited body of literature on entrepreneurship in RRR areas and address the gap in research on the growth intentions of

women entrepreneurs in these areas. Further, they can help to inform policy decisions that promote and support women's entrepreneurship in RRR areas. The study provides policymakers and practitioners with insights into the factors that influence women entrepreneurs' growth intentions in RRR areas, which can inform the development of policies and interventions to support these entrepreneurs.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between EL identity, TPB predictors and venture growth intentions. The findings of this study extend the TPB by highlighting the role of EL in shaping venture growth intentions. Further, it contributes to the literature on EL by providing insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationship between EL factors and venture growth intentions.

Finally, this study contributes to a better understanding of the business growth phenomenon of women entrepreneurs in RRR areas. This enhanced understanding helps to build the business case for government and entrepreneurship development agencies to fund practical, tailored, rural women EL development programs. The participants of these programs could enhance their competencies and develop their EL identities and venture growth intentions, contributing to the growth and development of their ventures and their communities.

1.7 Methodology

This research is rooted in a positivist paradigm, forming the fundamental framework for a systematic exploration of how EL factors impact the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in RRR areas of Australia. To investigate this, a quantitative research design was employed, focusing on women entrepreneurs situated in rural and regional Queensland, Australia. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, and surveys were distributed via email. A total of 99 valid responses were collected and analysed. This methodological approach adhered to empirical and scientific principles, enabling the systematic collection and numerical analysis of data, thus revealing objective relationships between EL factors and growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural settings.

Partial least squares structural equation modelling was used to analyse the data and evaluate the complex relationships among the variables of interest. The statistical software package Smart PLS was employed for this analysis. The structural model was assessed in accordance with the proportion of variance in the endogenous variable (R^2), the predictive relevance of the model (Q^2) and the significance of paths (Henseler et al. 2015). Further, as suggested by Hair et al. (2013), 5,000 bootstrapping-generated samples were used to compute

T-values to test the model. The analysis resulted in three research studies that provide unique insights into the relationship between EL identity, EP, EL, predictors of the TPB (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control) and growth intentions. The first study, ‘When entrepreneurial leadership identity and passion meet venture growth intention’, explored the direct and indirect effects of EL identity and passion on growth intentions. The second study, ‘The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia’, investigated the role of EL competency in the relationship between identity and growth intentions. The third study, ‘Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs’, combined the findings from the first two studies with the TPB to predict growth intentions.

The integration of the findings from the three studies provides a novel model for growth intentions through a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between EL identity, EL factors, predictors of the TPB (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control) and growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural Australia.

1.8 Limitations of study

The present study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, although the research assumptions were theoretically grounded, the cross-sectional design of the study did not allow for the establishment of causality. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this study should be interpreted with caution. Second, the study was conducted on a specific demographic that resides in rural and regional areas of Queensland and may not necessarily be generalisable to other contexts or populations. Moreover, given that the collected data used self-reporting measures, potential biases may have been introduced that could have affected the accuracy of the findings. Nonetheless, these limitations highlight opportunities for future researchers to address the gaps in knowledge and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

1.9 Structure of thesis

The thesis comprises six chapters that are organised in the following manner.

The first chapter provides an introduction that covers the background of the study, a statement of the problem, the research objectives and questions, the significance of the study and a brief description of the methodology employed.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review and the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual frameworks that are relevant to the study.

Chapter 3 contains the first research study, which examined the relationship between EL identity, passion and venture growth intentions. This study, titled ‘When entrepreneurial leadership identity and passion meet venture growth intention’, was published in the *Sustainability* journal.

Chapter 4 includes the second research study, which investigated the relationship between EL identity, EL competency and venture growth intentions. The study, titled ‘The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia’, is currently under review in the *Journal PLOS ONE*.

Chapter 5 contains the third research study, titled ‘Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs’, which integrated the outcomes of the initial two studies with the TPB to anticipate growth intentions. This study is under review in the *Journal of Rural Studies*.

Chapter 6 provides a discussion and conclusion that summarises the findings and contributions of the study.

1.10 Summary

The introductory chapter established the groundwork for investigating the role of EL in terms of the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs. It provided a background to the study and highlighted the problem statement, research objective and RQs that informed it. The chapter also summarised the methodology employed in this study and outlined its significance and limitations. The subsequent chapter delves into a literature review and the theoretical foundations of this study in addition to a conceptual framework that outlines the measurement constructs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 laid the groundwork for the thesis, introducing the background, problem statement, research objectives and methodology. Building on this foundation, Chapter 2 presents the study context, theoretical framework, a literature review and conceptual frameworks. It critically examines existing scholarly works and establishes the theoretical framework that guides the subsequent empirical analysis.

2.2 Study context

2.2.1 *Women entrepreneurship*

Women's entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the economic development of a country, making it imperative to encourage and cultivate women in entrepreneurial endeavours (Sarfaraz et al. 2014; Sajjad et al. 2020). Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of women-led businesses on economies in terms of income and employment (Houghton & Strong 2004). Moreover, women entrepreneurship is essential for fostering sustainable businesses (Langowitz & Minniti 2007; Henry et al. 2015). Despite these benefits, societal biases persist, hindering women's effectiveness and limiting their access to critical leadership roles (Scott & Brown 2006; Eagly 2007; Davis et al. 2010; Latu et al. 2013).

Women leaders encounter challenges in managing relationships within and outside their enterprises, which can be mitigated through the development and management of social and human capital (Scott & Brown 2006; Eagly 2007; Davis et al. 2010; Latu et al. 2013). The absence of such capital has a moderating effect on women's motivations to become entrepreneurial leaders (Marlow & Carter 2004; Avolio et al. 2009; Katila & Eriksson 2013). In addition, women are less likely to pursue entrepreneurial careers because of perceived skill and knowledge gaps as well as a lack of familiarity with entrepreneurial roles (Kirkwood 2007; Wilson et al. 2007; Yordanova & Tarrazon 2010). Gender roles further contribute to these disparities (Griffiths et al. 2013; Kalafatoglu & Mendoza 2017).

Prior studies have identified several factors that contribute to gender disparities in entrepreneurship, including differences in confidence, self-efficacy, risk perceptions, objectives, business perceptions and resilience between men and women (Brindley 2005; Nowiński et al. 2019). These disparities have led to the formation of gender stereotypes that

associate the business world primarily with men and favour male models of behaviour (Lewis 2006; Feder & Nițu-Antonie 2017).

Understanding how women entrepreneurs perceive entrepreneurship and business growth is vital to overcoming gender-related challenges and advancing the women entrepreneurs careers. Scholars have emphasised the significance of considering psychological aspects and cultural influences on entrepreneurship (Frese et al. 2016; Riantoputra & Muis 2020). Psychological and resilient coping mechanisms also affect women entrepreneurs (Uy et al. 2013; Stephan 2018). Moreover, psychological factors differentiate the structures of male and female entrepreneurship, influencing their entrepreneurial growth intentions (Diener et al. 2009; Kelley et al. 2017; Marlow & Martinez 2017; Stephan 2018; Peters et al. 2019; Margaçã et al. 2021). Attitudes and identities further differentiate women engaged in high-growth entrepreneurship, who view barriers as challenges to be overcome and connect their businesses to positive self-image and identity (Sweida & Reichard 2013).

Despite the significant population of women entrepreneurs, limited information is available about how they start and grow their businesses (Brush et al. 2019). Studies have shown that women entrepreneurs are under-represented in entrepreneurship research, accounting for less than 6% of the overall research (Brush et al. 2019). Furthermore, the global phenomenon of women having a lower proportion of entrepreneurs than men remains poorly understood, regardless of cultural and political contexts (Holmquist & Carter 2009). To address these gaps, there is an urgent need to investigate various aspects of female entrepreneurship on a broader scale and in different contexts. It is crucial to expand the theoretical concepts that are currently available to better understand the uniqueness of women's entrepreneurship as a research inquiry.

2.2.2 Women entrepreneurship in rural, regional and remote Australia

In the past two decades, Australia has witnessed an increase in the percentage of women entrepreneurs. However, unlike in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, the number of Australian women entrepreneurs remains relatively low (ABS 2015). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2017/18 Australian National Report, there were approximately 1.8 million early-stage entrepreneurs in Australia, accounting for 12.2% of the adult population (18–64 years old). Of these entrepreneurs, approximately 690,000 (38%) were women (GEM 2019). These figures clearly demonstrate the under-representation of women in the entrepreneurial landscape compared with their male

counterparts. In addition, the total entrepreneurial activity of women was estimated to be 6.2% lower than that of men (GEM 2019).

The situation is even more challenging for women entrepreneurs in RRR areas of Australia. Despite one-third of the Australian population residing in regional areas, only approximately 2.3% of women operate businesses in remote or very remote parts of the country (ABS 2015). This disparity highlights the need to address the lack of women's participation in entrepreneurship, specifically, in rural Australia. Such an under-representation is not only a policy concern but also signifies the underuse of potential entrepreneurial human capital (OECD 2012; Halabisky 2018).

Efforts to promote gender equality for women entrepreneurs have been undertaken by various organisations, including the Australian government and the European Union (Grosser 2009; WGEA 2012). However, the potential of women entrepreneurs, specifically, those in rural and regional Australia, remains largely untapped, presenting a significant research gap in Australia and beyond (Huq et al. 2020). In the Australian context, women only account for approximately one-third of owner-managers. Further, merely 13% of businesses in rural and regional areas are founded by women, in contrast to the 87% in urban areas (Xero 2020). Despite a 20-year time frame, the growth of female-led businesses in Australia has increased by a mere 3%, emphasising the persistent under-representation of women in entrepreneurship, specifically, in rural and regional areas (Xero 2020). However, the lack of comprehensive data on Australian women-owned businesses hinders a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of this disconnect.

In addition to the broader challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, those in rural and regional Australia encounter specific barriers. These include limited job opportunities compared with their urban and male counterparts, which prompt them to seek entrepreneurial off-farm income and diversify on-farm activities (AHRC 2017). Women entrepreneurs in these areas also face cultural barriers because of male-dominated norms, limited access to capital, insufficient local business education, distance to main centres, unreliable internet access and a lack of entrepreneurship development services, like-minded peers, networks, mentors and confidence (Hay & Pearce 2014; Jenkins 2018; Wiesner 2018a)

Addressing the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and increasing their representation would have a significant and positive impact on the economic benefits derived from the growth of women-owned ventures. The RRR context of women entrepreneurship in Australia is multifaceted, encompassing functional, social and cultural challenges. These challenges arise from historical gender dynamics, limited access to capital and education, patriarchal social and cultural contexts and under-representation in business and government

(Wiesner 2018a). It is crucial to recognise the diverse experiences of women in rural and regional areas beyond the notion of solely farming women. In addition, the occurrence of natural disasters in these areas, such as floods and bushfires, further complicate women's efforts to diversify on-farm activities and find off-farm income (AHRC 2017).

Australian women entrepreneurs in RRR areas have reported feelings of isolation, a lack of visibility, the distance to main centres, limited access to entrepreneurship incubation facilities, unreliable internet access, the absence of like-minded peers, low confidence and limited access to mentors as significant barriers in their entrepreneurship journey (Wiesner 2018a). Overcoming these challenges and fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for women entrepreneurs in these areas is crucial to unlock their entrepreneurial potential and drive economic growth.

2.3 Theoretical frameworks

2.3.1 Theory of planned behaviour

The TPB, proposed by Ajzen (1985), builds on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Fishbein et al. 1980) by adding the concept of perceived behavioural control. The TPB suggests that behavioural intentions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, which, in turn, shape actual behaviour.

Attitude towards the behaviour refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of engaging in a specific behaviour (Ajzen 1991, 2001). It is influenced by behavioural beliefs, which are an individual's beliefs about the consequences of performing the behaviour (Ajzen 2001). In the context of this study, attitude towards growth, specifically, the intention to grow a venture, is relevant to entrepreneurial behaviour. Entrepreneurs who hold a positive attitude towards growth are more likely to have a strong intention to grow their venture. Understanding and influencing attitudes towards growth can be instrumental in promoting and supporting the growth of entrepreneurial ventures.

Subjective norms represent an individual's perception of the social pressure to perform or not perform a behaviour (Ajzen 1991; Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). They are determined by normative beliefs, which capture an individual's perception of how important others, such as family members, peers, teachers and other influential individuals, view the behaviour (Ajzen 1991). In the context of venture growth intentions, subjective norms encompass the perceived expectations and opinions of relevant others about the growth of the entrepreneur's venture. The influence of subjective norms can play a significant role in shaping an entrepreneur's intention to pursue growth opportunities.

Perceived behavioural control refers to individuals' perceptions of their ability to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen 1991). It is influenced by control beliefs, which reflect individuals' beliefs about the presence of facilitating or constraining factors that may affect their ability to engage in the behaviour (Ajzen 2002). In the context of this study, perceived behavioural control relates to entrepreneurs' perceptions of their competence and control over the necessary resources, skills and external factors to successfully pursue venture growth. Higher levels of perceived behavioural control are likely to positively influence entrepreneurs' growth intentions and their subsequent behaviours in terms of venture growth.

The TPB proposes that intentions serve as an immediate predictor of behaviour (Kautonen et al. 2013). Although behaviour itself may be challenging to observe and analyse, studying related behavioural intentions provides insight into the factors that influence the intended behaviour (Ajzen 1991). Intention represents the motivational factors that drive behaviour and indicates an individual's willingness to make an effort to engage in a particular behaviour (Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). The interaction between intentions and perceived behavioural control ultimately shapes behaviour (Ajzen 1991).

In summary, the TPB provides a theoretical foundation to understand the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. It posits that attitudes towards growth, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control influence the women entrepreneurs' intentions to pursue venture growth. Examining these factors provides insights into the psychological processes and social influences that affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

2.3.2 Identity theory and social identity theory

Social identity theory (Turner 1982; Abrams & Hogg 1988) explains that individuals possess knowledge of belonging to a social category or group. This identification with a group leads to self-categorisation and social comparison processes in which individuals perceive similarities within their in-group and differences with out-groups (Abrams & Hogg 1988). The theory suggests that when individuals strongly identify with a specific social identity, such as EL identity, they internalise the associated norms and values, which, in turn, influence their behaviour (Stets & Burke 2000). In the context of this study, rural women entrepreneurs who strongly identify with an EL identity are likely to internalise entrepreneurial norms, values and behaviours thereby shaping their intentions for venture growth.

Identity theory (Stryker 1968; Stryker & Serpe 1982) focuses on the formation and maintenance of identities and their influence on individuals' behaviours. This theory

highlights the interplay between role identities and group identities as well as the incorporation of a person's identity. Role identities involve fulfilling role expectations, coordinating interactions with role partners and manipulating the environment to control resources associated with the role (Stryker & Burke 2000). Identity theory emphasises the cognitive process of self-verification in which individuals behave consistently with their role identities (Stets & Burke 2000). In the context of EL, rural women entrepreneurs may adopt role identities as leaders and business owners, aligning their behaviours and actions with the expectations and norms of these roles. This alignment between role identity and EL identity is expected to shape their attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and passion related to venture growth.

According to social identity theory, individuals who strongly identify with an EL identity are likely to perceive entrepreneurial norms and values as guiding their behaviour. This perception of normative influences from the in-group may strengthen their intentions to pursue venture growth. Moreover, the cognitive process of self-verification, as emphasised in identity theory, suggests that rural women entrepreneurs who align their behaviours with their role identities as leaders and business owners may experience increased self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control. This, in turn, positively influences their intentions for venture growth.

Furthermore, the social identity theory of leadership, as proposed by Hogg (2001), posits that leadership arises from social categorisation and depersonalisation processes linked to social identity. This theory suggests that leaders emerge, maintain their position and are effective because of fundamental social cognitive processes that cause individuals to perceive themselves in terms of the defining characteristics of a common and distinctive in-group (Hogg 2001). Building on this theory, it can be argued that EL also arises from social categorisation and depersonalisation processes linked to EL identity. Given that rural women entrepreneurs identify themselves as entrepreneurial leaders, they assimilate entrepreneurial norms, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours associated with this identity, which subsequently influence their intentions and behaviours for venture growth.

In summary, the social identity theory and identity theory provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals' self-conception and social categorisation influence their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. These theories offer valuable insights into how the entrepreneurial leader identity of RRR women entrepreneurs can influence their attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, passion and EL behaviours. The interaction between entrepreneurial leader identity and these factors is expected to shape their intentions to pursue venture growth. Exploring these relationships provides a deeper

understanding of the psychological processes and social influences that affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

2.3.3 Theoretical proposition

The developed theoretical framework integrates the TPB as the overarching framework, incorporating concepts from social identity theory and identity theory. It proposes that EL identity, shaped by social cognitive processes, influences the constructs of passion, EL, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. These constructs, in turn, exert an influence on the venture growth intentions of rural women entrepreneurs in Australia.

This proposition underscores the significance of combining the TPB with social identity theory and identity theory to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics governing the growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs. The pivotal role of EL identity within this framework acts as a catalyst, actively shaping and influencing the constructs of passion, EL, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. As a result, these interwoven constructs collaboratively play a vital role in determining the venture growth intentions specifically within the context of rural women entrepreneurs in Australia.

2.4 Venture growth intentions

Venture growth intentions have garnered significant attention in entrepreneurship literature because of their pivotal role in driving business success and economic development (Dutta & Thornhill, 2008). By elucidating entrepreneurs' goals and aspirations for their venture's growth trajectory, studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial growth intentions as a precursor to actual business growth and sustainability (Wiklund & Shepherd 2003; Costin 2012; Kolvereid & Isaksen 2017). Moreover, the societal benefits stemming from venture growth, such as job creation, technological advancements and improved living standards, underscore the significance of understanding and fostering growth intentions (Venugopal 2016).

Entrepreneurial growth intention has been conceptualised and labelled in various ways in prior studies. Dutta and Thornhill (2008) defined it as entrepreneurs' goals or aspirations for the growth trajectory of their venture. Other terms used to measure entrepreneurial growth intention include growth intention, growth aspiration and growth motivation (Wiklund & Shepherd 2003; Edelman et al. 2010; Douglas 2013). These labels

highlight the diverse ways in which researchers have approached and examined this important aspect of entrepreneurship.

Although entrepreneurial intentions have been extensively studied in regard to business startup (eg. Franke & Lüthje 2004; Turker & Selcuk 2009; Liñán et al. 2011; Kim 2014; Mamun et al. 2017), the construct of growth intentions has received comparatively less attention (Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). Douglas (2013) emphasised the need for clarity and distinctness in understanding entrepreneurial intentions, leading to the identification of growth-oriented and independence-oriented intentions as separate constructs. This distinction reflects the nuanced nature of entrepreneurial growth intentions and calls for focused investigations into the factors that influence these intentions.

Prior studies have examined a range of determinants that shape growth intentions. Individual factors, which encompass motivation, competencies and personal traits, have been found to influence growth aspirations (Baum & Locke 2004; Aidis & Mickiewicz 2006; Hessels et al. 2008; Puente et al. 2017). Further, opportunity-based entrepreneurs have demonstrated stronger growth intentions (Hessels et al. 2008). Environmental factors, including government policies, social norms, role models and support networks, have also been identified as influential drivers of growth intentions (Van Stel & Storey 2004; Bosma et al. 2012). Recently, Mahn et al. (2023) found that the rural context has a detrimental effect on growth intentions. In addition, business-related factors, such as business size, ownership structure, outside investment and innovation, affect an entrepreneur's growth intentions (Wiklund et al. 2003; Cassar 2007; Terjesen & Szerb 2008; Uma et al. 2013).

However, despite the wealth of studies on entrepreneurial intentions, the theoretical understanding of growth intentions remains limited, specifically, concerning women entrepreneurs (Costin 2012). Prior studies have focused predominantly on entrepreneurial intentions related to business startup, leaving a critical gap in comprehending growth intentions and their unique determinants. Furthermore, the interplay between perceived EL and growth intentions requires further exploration, helping to explain the underlying mechanisms that drive venture growth (Murnieks, Klotz, et al. 2020).

Addressing these gaps in knowledge is vital for developing comprehensive theoretical frameworks and designing effective interventions to foster venture growth intentions. By deepening the understanding of the factors that influence growth aspirations, specifically, among women entrepreneurs, scholars and practitioners, can unlock new insights and strategies to support entrepreneurial success and drive economic growth.

2.5 Entrepreneurial leadership

EL has emerged as a critical factor that influences venture growth and success. It encompasses the individual characteristics and behaviours of leaders, such as their vision, risk-taking propensity, proactiveness and ability to inspire and influence others (Gupta et al. 2004; Kuratko 2007; Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri 2017; Bagheri et al. 2020). Haim Faridian (2023) emphasises that EL stands at the core of successful entrepreneurship. Prior studies have suggested that EL plays a crucial role in shaping growth-oriented behaviours and intentions (Harrison et al. 2016). Moreover, EL is instrumental in enhancing strategic flexibility, resulting in improved venture performance (Hensellek et al. 2023). Entrepreneurs, by nature, act as leaders who create a vision for their ventures, select and mobilise team members and drive the entrepreneurial process (Gupta et al. 2004). They possess a unique ability to identify opportunities, mobilise resources and motivate others to work towards a common goal (Gupta et al. 2004; Kuratko 2007; Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri 2017). In rural areas, EL becomes even more crucial for economic development (Harrison et al. 2016). Rural entrepreneurs act not only as entrepreneurs but also as entrepreneurial leaders (Miles & Morrison 2020) who identify and exploit opportunities, communicate their vision and influence others to support and achieve it (Gupta et al. 2004; Leitch & Volery 2017).

Prior studies have found a positive relationship between entrepreneurial competencies, leadership competencies and entrepreneurial intention (Sánchez 2011, 2013; Costa et al. 2016; González-López et al. 2020). Entrepreneurial leaders who possess strong leadership skills demonstrate the ability to cultivate a clear vision for their ventures, inspire and motivate their teams and make strategic decisions that foster growth (Cai et al. 2019). Furthermore, competencies have been identified as essential factors linked to growth aspirations, underscoring their relevance in entrepreneurial development (Baum & Locke 2004; Aidis & Mickiewicz 2006; Hessels et al. 2008; Puente et al. 2017). Although prior studies have predominantly examined entrepreneurial and leadership competencies as distinct entities, recent studies have increasingly recognised the value of integrating these dimensions. Consequently, there has been a growing emphasis on EL competency as a cohesive construct, highlighting its profound significance in entrepreneurial development (Bagheri & Pihie 2011b; Harrison et al. 2016; Bagheri & Pihie 2018; Magazi 2019).

Although leadership has been extensively studied in psychology and organisational research, there is a scarcity of studies on how entrepreneurs perceive themselves as leaders and the effects of leadership self-perceptions on venture growth intentions. Understanding the self is essential for gaining insight into leadership (Sparrowe 2005). Leaders' self-perception

and alignment with their leadership role are influenced by their feelings and expectations about that role (Snook et al. 2010; Guillén et al. 2015; Epitropaki et al. 2017). Identity plays a crucial role in guiding behaviour, and leader identity is an integral part of the leadership process (Markus et al. 1990; Day et al. 2008; Kwok et al. 2018).

The existing literature provides valuable insights into the role of EL in venture growth and success. However, there is a gap in understanding the specific impact of EL on venture growth intentions among Australian rural women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, a limited number of studies have explored how entrepreneurs perceive themselves as leaders and how these self-perceptions influence their entrepreneurial behaviour. These gaps present an opportunity for further investigation into the link between EL, entrepreneurial leader identity and growth intentions among regional women entrepreneurs.

2.6 Entrepreneurial leader identity

The term ‘entrepreneurial leader identity’ refers to individuals’ perceptions of themselves as an entrepreneurial leader. Entrepreneurial leaders identify opportunities for their businesses, assemble and motivate teams to achieve entrepreneurial goals and possess visions for success (Gupta et al. 2004). Developing an entrepreneurial leader identity involves internalising the entrepreneurial and leadership aspects of this identity (DeRue & Ashford 2010). Furthermore, integrating the entrepreneurial leader identity into one’s existing identity is crucial for establishing an authentic and enduring sense of being an entrepreneurial leader (Morgan et al. 2013). In essence, entrepreneurial leader identity represents an individual’s self-conception that combines entrepreneurial and leadership elements, which plays a pivotal role in becoming a successful entrepreneurial leader.

Prior studies have explored various identities of entrepreneurs to explain the phenomenon of entrepreneurial growth. There has been debate among researchers about the role of EL and the characteristics of leaders in this process. In addition, researchers have argued that identity plays a crucial role in shaping and guiding behaviour (Markus et al. 1990; Kwok et al. 2018) and leader identity is an important component of the leadership process (Day et al. 2008).

Individuals come to know themselves and their identities through self-reflection and by observing their thoughts, actions and how others perceive them. Theorists in cognitive social psychology, such as Markus (1977), view identities as cognitive self-schemas, which are generalisations about the self that organise and govern the processing of self-related information. These self-schemas indicate the existence and importance of self-knowledge in specific areas. Individuals who possess self-schemas in a particular domain, known as

schematics, are aware of themselves in that domain and place significant personal value on that self-knowledge. The self is an intersection of personality, cognition and social factors, which forms the basis for one's worldview and behaviour (Cross & Markus 1994; Gardner et al. 1999). Memory and behaviour are organised using self-schemas (Kihlstrom & Klein 1994), which are crucial because they influence subsequent thoughts and actions (Markus 1977; Cross & Markus 1994). It is predicted that one's sense of self and identity influence motivations, thinking patterns, sense-making of oneself and others, actions taken, feelings and self-control (Oyserman 2015). Furthermore, individuals' expectations about leadership roles and their alignment with their sense of self are influenced by their feelings towards those roles (Ibarra et al. 2010; Guillén et al. 2015; Epitropaki et al. 2017).

In the field of leadership research, it is widely recognised that cognitive interpretations of leadership experiences significantly influence the development of an individual's self-identity as a leader (Miscenko et al. 2017; Kragt & Guenter 2018). Specifically, when individuals' self-image aligns with their perception of a leader or they can demonstrate the competencies of a typical leader, they are more likely to identify themselves as leaders (DeRue & Ashford 2010; Kragt & Day 2020). Moreover, exposure to other leaders with whom one can identify further enhances the ability to identify as a leader. According to the cognitive theory of leadership (Lord & Hall 2005), leader identity functions as a cognitive schema that stores information and knowledge associated with leadership roles, guiding individuals' behaviour and interactions in such settings. From this perspective, it is argued that entrepreneurial leader identity plays a vital role in shaping the behaviour of entrepreneurial leaders, including their decision-making processes and growth trajectories.

Entrepreneurial leader identity serves as a guide for entrepreneurial processes and behaviour, including the growth of ventures. Researchers have made attempts to understand entrepreneurship from various perspectives, including EL (Leitch & Volery 2017). However, a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship cannot be achieved without considering the identity of entrepreneurial leaders and how they perceive leadership (Bagheri & Pihie 2011a).

Leadership experiences have a significant impact on leaders' self-identity, especially when they can effectively demonstrate the necessary competencies that are expected of a leader (Kragt & Day 2020). In addition, the identity mechanism of a leader is closely tied to the growth of a venture (Mathias & Williams 2018). Scholars have shown considerable interest in understanding how an entrepreneur's identity influences the growth decisions of established ventures. In their study, Shepherd and Haynie (2009) provided evidence supporting the connection between identity and the growth choices made by entrepreneurs,

while Liu et al. (2022) highlighted that the social identity of entrepreneurs actively promotes the strategic entrepreneurial activities of their businesses.

Although the context and nature of EL within small firms have been studied by researchers (e.g. Cogliser & Brigham 2004; Cope et al. 2011; Koryak et al. 2015; Bagheri 2017; Soomro et al. 2018; Naushad 2021), there is a need for a closer examination of the cognitive and motivational profile of leaders in small and medium-sized enterprises, including their identities, passions and intentions (Koryak et al. 2015). Numerous studies have demonstrated the crucial role of self-identity within the TPB in predicting intentions and behaviours (e.g. Obschonka et al. 2015; Carfora et al. 2017; Paquin & Keating 2017; Cao et al. 2023). In a meta-analysis, Rise et al. (2010) revealed that self-identity explains a substantial amount of additional variance in intentions, even after controlling for past behaviour. There is an increasing body of evidence that has supported the integration of personal and social identity into the TPB for predicting intentions (e.g. Conner & Armitage 1998; Ataei et al. 2021; Zaman et al. 2022). This theoretical advancement signifies the incorporation of key concepts from social identity theory (Turner 1982; Abrams & Hogg 1988) and identity theory (Stryker 1968; Stryker & Serpe 1982) into the TPB to enhance the prediction of intentions.

Moreover, a growing body of research has highlighted the significance of self-identity as a predictor of behavioural intentions (Armitage et al. 1999; Smith et al. 2008; Escalas et al. 2013; Carfora et al. 2016; Carfora et al. 2017). Although Sparks and Shepherd (1992) proposed that self-identity should influence intentions through attitudes, they discovered that the identity of a green consumer independently predicted intentions to purchase organic products. Similarly, entrepreneurial identity has been identified as a robust determinant of intentionality (Vesalainen & Pihkala 1999). Early literature has indicated a positive relationship between entrepreneurial self-identity and entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger, 2009; Dheer and Lenartowicz, 2016; Liñán et al., 2018; Obschonka et al., 2015). Recently, (Ndofirepi 2020) found that entrepreneurial self-identity has a statistically significant and direct positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions.

The existing body of literature has provided significant insights into the importance of EL identity in the formation of EL, entrepreneurial intentions and the growth and success of ventures. However, there is still a gap in the understanding of the specific influence of EL identity on venture growth intentions, specifically, among Australian rural women entrepreneurs. In addition, there is a lack of studies that explore the interrelationship between EL identity, EL and the TPB in explaining the phenomenon of venture growth. These gaps in the literature present an opportunity for further investigation into the connection between EL,

entrepreneurial leader identity, the TPB and growth intentions, specifically, among regional women entrepreneurs. Conducting research in this area would contribute to addressing the existing gaps in knowledge and provide valuable insights into the factors that influence venture growth among rural women entrepreneurs in Australia.

2.7 Entrepreneurial passion

Passion plays a crucial role in entrepreneurship because it influences various aspects of the entrepreneurial process and outcomes. It is defined as a strong inclination towards a self-defining activity that individuals love, find significant and to which they commit time and effort (Vallerand 2010). EP has been associated with positive sentiments, attitudes and self-identity, strengthening motivation and stimulating individuals to overcome challenges and achieve business growth (Murnieks et al. 2014; Cardon & Kirk 2015; Huyghe et al. 2016; Santos & Cardon 2019; de Mol et al. 2020). Numerous research studies have highlighted the influence of EP on critical outcomes in entrepreneurship. EP has been found to affect creativity in developing entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial persistence, employees' commitment, entrepreneurial performance, technological innovation, strategic change and venture investment (Cardon, Sudek, et al. 2009; Breugst et al. 2012; Cardon & Kirk 2015; Biraglia & Kadile 2017; Hatak et al. 2021; Kiani et al. 2021; Montiel-Campos 2021; McSweeney et al. 2022). Moreover, it has been positively associated with entrepreneurial intention and venture growth (Baum & Locke 2004; Roberts & Welsch 2010; De Clercq et al. 2013; Brink 2015; Drnovsek et al. 2016; Huyghe et al. 2016; Neneh 2020, 2022). However, although the relationship between EP and intention as well as EP and growth has been explored, the relationship between EP and growth intention remains relatively unexplored, particularly in the context of women entrepreneurship (RRR women entrepreneurship).

Understanding the antecedents of EP is essential because of its complex nature. Prior studies have focused more on the outcomes of passion rather than its underlying factors. Only a limited number of empirical research studies have examined the antecedents of EP (Newman et al. 2021). Scholars have suggested exploring the role of entrepreneurial identities and identity theory to understand the origins and growth of passion (Webb et al. 2010). Identity theory suggests that passion experiences are rooted in self-defining activities that are important for one's identity (Cardon, Wincent, et al. 2009; Cardon & Kirk 2015). In addition, considering other people's perspectives and reactions to oneself can significantly influence motivation and self-construal (Burke 1991; Stryker & Burke 2000). Prior studies have shown a positive association between entrepreneurial identity and passion (Murnieks et al. 2014; Murnieks, Cardon, et al. 2020). In a recent study, Stevenson et al. (2023) identified

a noteworthy and substantial positive link between entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurial passion. However, there is still more to explore, especially in terms of other identities in entrepreneurship, such as the leader identity of entrepreneurs, which may have a close relationship with EP.

The literature has largely overlooked the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and EP. However, some studies have found a positive association between EL and passion (Dean & Ford 2017). This indicates that there is potential for a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and EP. Exploring this relationship can provide valuable insights into the connection between identity and passion in entrepreneurship.

EP has been regarded as a personal trait that drives individuals to start businesses and influences the entrepreneurial process (Baum et al. 2001; Cardon, Wincent, et al. 2009). Although prior studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between EP and entrepreneurial intention, the connection between EP and growth intention requires further exploration. It is important to understand how EP relates to entrepreneurial growth intention because passion and growth intention have been found to be positively associated with entrepreneurial outcomes (Biraglia & Kadile 2017; Murad et al. 2021). Furthermore, studies in other domains have shown a positive relationship between passion and intention, indicating the potential positive impact of EP on growth intention.

Despite the recognised significance of EP in influencing various aspects of the entrepreneurial process and outcomes, there remains a gap in the literature in regard to the relationship between EP and growth intention. Although prior studies have explored the associations between EP and intention, as well as passion and growth, the specific connection between EP and growth intention remains relatively unexplored. Moreover, limited attention has been given to understanding the antecedents of EP, specifically, the role of entrepreneurial identities. In addition, the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and EP requires further investigation. Therefore, there is a pressing need for studies that examine the relationship between EP and growth intention, delve into the antecedents of EP and explore the potential influence of entrepreneurial leader identity on passion. Addressing these research gaps will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of passion in entrepreneurial ventures and contribute valuable insights to theory and practice in the field of entrepreneurship.

2.8 Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control

The TPB, developed by (Ajzen 1985), incorporates attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control as predictors of behavioural intention. This subsection aims to

provide a detailed exploration of the predictors of the TPB, focusing specifically on attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control within the context of venture growth intentions.

Attitude represents an individual's positive or negative evaluation of a specific behaviour (Ajzen 1991, 2001). In the context of entrepreneurship, attitudes towards one's venture can have a significant impact on various factors, such as resource allocation, marketing strategies and product development (Krueger et al. 2000; Karlsson & Honig 2009). Entrepreneurs' positive attitudes towards their ventures can influence their decision-making processes and growth intentions (Cliff 1998; Venugopal 2016). Specifically, a positive attitude towards growth signifies a belief that pursuing growth leads to favourable outcomes, such as increased profitability, market share and competitiveness (Cliff 1998). This positive evaluation of growth is influenced by behavioural beliefs, which reflect an individual's expectations about the outcomes associated with the behaviour (Ajzen 2001). Studies have consistently shown that a positive attitude towards growth is associated with higher levels of venture growth intention (Hermans et al. 2015; Venugopal 2016).

Subjective norms capture an individual's perception of social pressure to either engage in or abstain from a particular behaviour (Ajzen 1991; Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). Entrepreneurs may perceive their norms from group members, specifically, those who are seen as more prototypical of the group and believe that these prototypical members are important to them (Fisher et al. 2017). Given that individuals engage in the process of self-categorisation and group membership, they develop a social identity that encompasses the norms, values and beliefs that regulate their group-related behaviour (Korte 2007; Shore & Chung 2021). Within the context of venture growth intentions, subjective norms encompass the influence of important stakeholders and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem on an individual's decision to pursue growth. When individuals believe that their social group expects or encourages them to perform a particular behaviour, their perception of norms becomes stronger and they may feel more in control of their behaviour and more likely to perform it (Bandura 1982; Bagozzi & Lee 2002).

Perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This perception is influenced by control beliefs and self-efficacy, which represent individuals' belief in their control over their competence to execute the behaviour successfully (Bandura 1977; Ajzen 1991). In the context of venture growth intentions, entrepreneurs' perceptions of their ability to regulate their behaviours is influenced by social factors, such as social support and available resources (Schmutzler et al. 2019). When individuals perceive that they have sufficient social support and resources to

perform a specific behaviour, their perceptions of their abilities to control their behaviours increases (Brändle et al. 2018). Self-efficacy beliefs are strengthened when individuals have personal experiences of success, observe similar others succeeding, receive positive feedback or encouragement and experience positive emotions associated with the behaviour (Bandura 1997). Perceived behavioural control and self-efficacy are intertwined and can be affected by an individual's social identity and the expectations of others (Brändle et al. 2018).

Although the TPB provides a valuable framework for understanding the formation of entrepreneurial growth intentions, it is important to acknowledge that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control collectively explain only a portion of the variation in intentions (Kolvereid 1996; Van Gelderen et al. 2008; Liñán & Chen 2009; Munir et al. 2019). Researchers have recognised the need to incorporate additional factors or modifications to enhance the predictive power of the TPB in explaining entrepreneurial intentions (Lortie & Castogiovanni 2015). Efforts have included integrating theories, such as self-determination theory, and exploring the influence of strategy-making on intention (Al-Jubari 2019).

Understanding the predictors of the TPB, namely, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, is crucial for comprehending venture growth intentions. A positive attitude towards growth, perceived support from stakeholders and confidence in one's abilities to pursue growth play pivotal roles in shaping venture growth intentions. Although the TPB offers valuable insights, further research is needed to explore additional predictors and refine the understanding of venture growth intentions within the context of entrepreneurship.

2.9 Conceptual framework

This section presents a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationships among the constructs of EL identity, EL, passion, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and venture growth intentions among Australian rural women entrepreneurs. The conceptual framework builds upon the previously discussed theoretical framework and offers a visual representation of the proposed relationships. The following Figure 2.1 depicts the conceptual framework.

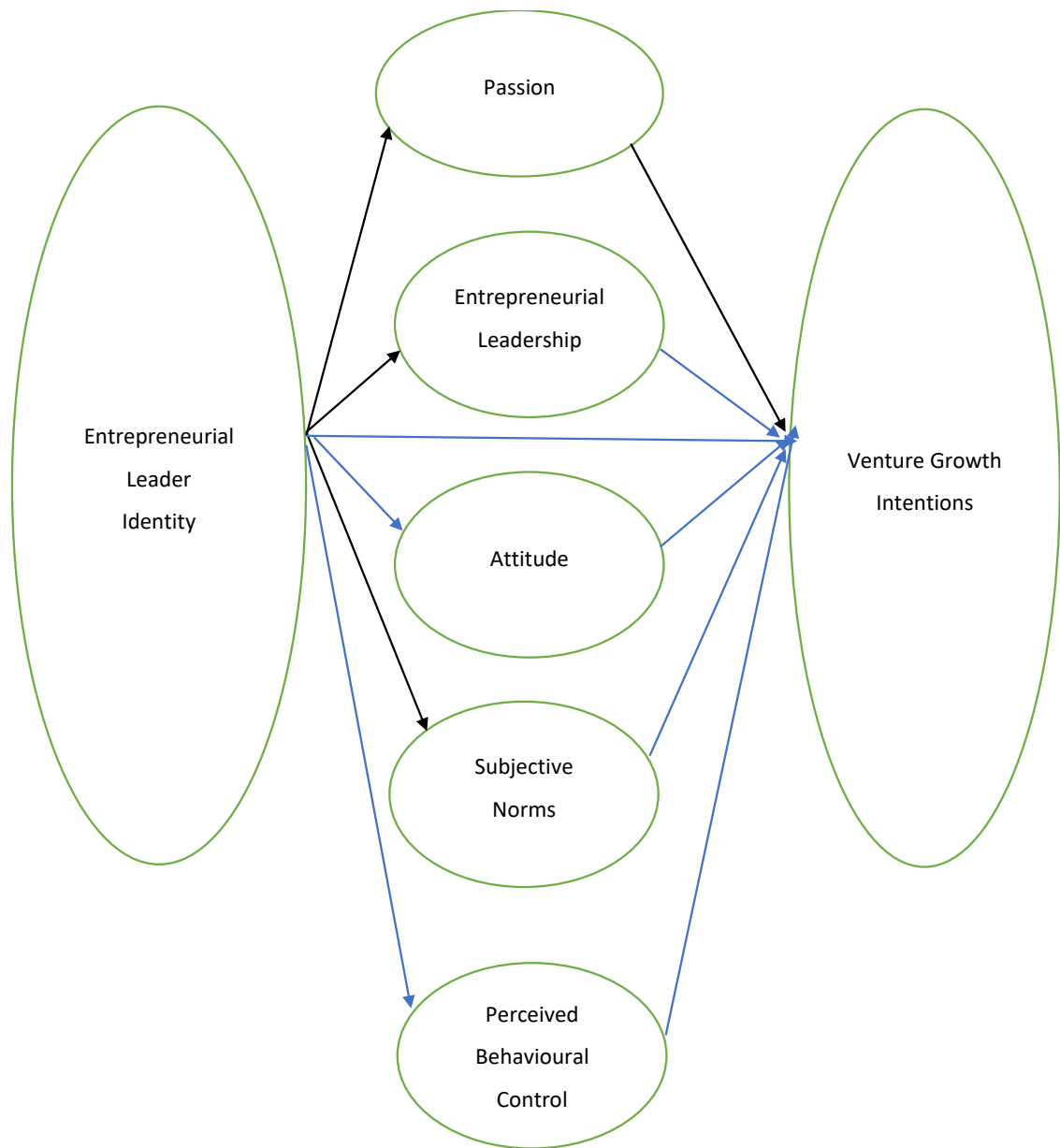


Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework

2.9.1 Components of conceptual model:

1. EL identity: The construct of EL identity signifies the integration of entrepreneurial and leadership identities within individuals. It reflects their self-concept as entrepreneurial leaders and influences their self-perceptions, motivations and behaviours related to the growth of their rural women-owned ventures.
2. EL: The construct of EL represents the competencies, skills and behaviours exhibited by leaders in driving entrepreneurial initiatives within their ventures. In the model, EL is proposed to mediate the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions.

3. **Passion:** Passion refers to a strong, enduring and intense emotional attachment and commitment to one's entrepreneurial pursuits. It is expected that individuals who have a strong EL identity exhibit strong passion and higher levels of passion for their ventures correspond to higher levels of growth intentions.
4. **Attitude:** The construct of attitude captures individuals' attitudes towards the growth of rural women-owned ventures. Attitude is expected to mediate the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions.
5. **Subjective norms:** Subjective norms represent the perceived social pressures and norms that influence the intentions and behaviours of rural women entrepreneurs. Subjective norms mediate the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions.
6. **Perceived behavioural control:** Perceived behavioural control refers to the perception of ease or difficulty in performing growth-oriented behaviours for rural women entrepreneurs. It mediates the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions.
7. **Venture growth intentions:** Venture growth intentions represent the desired level of growth and expansion that individuals aim to achieve in their entrepreneurial ventures. It is influenced by attitudes towards growth, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, EL identity, passion and EL.

2.9.2 Proposed relationships

The conceptual model proposes several relationships among the key constructs:

- EL identity is expected to have a positive and direct effect on venture growth intentions, suggesting that individuals who strongly identify as entrepreneurial leaders are more likely to have higher levels of growth intentions.
- EL identity is hypothesised to have a positive and indirect effect on venture growth intentions through the mediating role of passion. It is anticipated that individuals who have a strong EL identity exhibit higher levels of passion, which, in turn, positively influence their growth intentions.
- EL identity is hypothesised to have a positive and indirect effect on venture growth intentions through the mediating role of EL. It is anticipated that individuals who have

a strong EL identity exhibit higher levels of EL, which, in turn, positively influence their growth intentions.

- EL identity is hypothesised to have a positive and indirect effect on venture growth intentions through the mediating role of attitude. It is anticipated that individuals who have a strong EL identity exhibit higher levels of attitude, which, in turn, positively influence their growth intentions.
- EL identity is hypothesised to have a positive and indirect effect on venture growth intentions through the mediating role of subjective norms. It is anticipated that individuals who have a strong EL identity exhibit higher levels of subjective norms, which, in turn, positively influence their growth intentions.
- EL identity is hypothesised to have a positive and indirect effect on venture growth intentions through the mediating role of perceived behavioural control. It is anticipated that individuals who have a strong EL identity exhibit higher levels of perceived behavioural control, which, in turn, positively influence their growth intentions.

2.9.3 Conclusion

The presented conceptual framework integrates the key constructs of EL identity, EL, passion, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and venture growth intentions. It provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the complex relationships among these constructs in the context of Australian rural women entrepreneurship. The framework is a guide for empirical researchers and offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners who are seeking to support the growth and success of rural women entrepreneurs.

2.10 Summary

In conclusion, Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review, theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks for the study. It examined existing scholarly works, identified gaps in the literature and established a theoretical foundation to guide the subsequent empirical analysis. This chapter sets the stage for Chapter 3, which presents the first research study, which focuses on the relationship between EL identity, passion and venture growth intentions. By integrating the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 offers valuable insights into the specific research area and contributes to the overall understanding of EL and venture growth.

CHAPTER 3: PAPER 1 – WHEN ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY AND PASSION MEET VENTURE GROWTH INTENTION

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive overview of the thesis, establishing the background, problem statement, research objectives and methodology. Chapter 2 further contributed to the foundation by presenting a concise literature review, theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks. This literature review critically analysed existing scholarly works, identified research gaps and established the theoretical framework that serves as a guiding framework for the subsequent empirical analysis.

In line with the research objectives, Chapter 3 focuses on the first research study titled ‘When entrepreneurial leadership identity and passion meet venture growth intention’, which was published in the *Sustainability* journal. This study investigated the relationship between EL identity, passion and venture growth intentions. By delving into this topic, the study aimed to help to explain the factors that influence the growth intentions of entrepreneurs and the ways that their identity and passion play a role in shaping these intentions.

Within this chapter, the methodology employed for the research study, including the research design, data collection methods, sampling procedures and data analysis techniques, is detailed. The study’s key findings, in addition to their implications, are discussed thus contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and offering insights for practitioners, policymakers and researchers.

Article

When Entrepreneurial Leadership Identity and Passion Meet Venture Growth Intention

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Abstract: Within the emerging domain of entrepreneurial leadership research, gender issues have been largely ignored. This study aims to examine the nexus between entrepreneurial leader identity, entrepreneurial passion, and growth intention. This is done within the stacked context of being a woman entrepreneur, and in rural, regional and remote (RRR) Australia. This unique study draws upon a cross-sectional survey of 99 women entrepreneurs, employing a partial least square structural equation model. The study has found a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity on the one hand and growth intention and passion on the other but could not find any conclusive evidence of a relationship between entrepreneurial passion and venture growth intention. The study opens new research avenues into the novel construct of entrepreneurial leader identity and helps to better understand the dynamics of RRR women entrepreneurship in the Australian context.

Keywords: entrepreneurial leadership; women entrepreneurs; rural; regional; remote Australia; entrepreneurial passion; entrepreneurial leadership identity; venture growth intentions



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1. Introduction

Recent research has argued that entrepreneurial leadership, which is the main research field of this study, is a new paradigm that explores the common themes and linkages between entrepreneurship and leadership [1]. Entrepreneurial leadership is defined variously in the literature but for the purpose of this study, it is defined as individuals who identify and exploit opportunities and add value through influencing and mobilizing internal and external stakeholders who support the vision they have created for their enterprise [2–5]. The field of entrepreneurial leadership is emerging as something quite distinctive owing to the immense change in contexts and environments characterized by uncertainty and immeasurable risk within which entrepreneurs find themselves [6].

Within this emerging domain of research, gender issues have been largely ignored [7], even though there is a growing body of research on gender issues in the domains of entrepreneurship and leadership respectively [8–16]. In this paper, we follow a gender-specific approach by focusing on women in the under-explored context of rural, regional and remote (RRR) Australia. In doing so this article builds on the contextualization argument of Harrison, Leitch and McAdam [7] where gender is part of the context. They argue that, as in the field of entrepreneurship more generally, it is impossible to discuss entrepreneurial leadership separately from the context within which it is demonstrated because context affords both opportunities and constraints owing to the actions of individuals through spatial and institutional norms [17].

This study is important for several reasons. First, we do not fully understand the global phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurship, regardless of cultural and political contexts [18]. Women-owned entrepreneurial ventures comprise only 13% of all entrepreneurial ventures in Australia [19]. In addition, within Australia, global start-ups with at least one female founder secured only 23.7% of all venture funding [20].

Therefore, it is essential to investigate the various aspects of women entrepreneurship in a broader context and scale, including in RRR contexts. Examining women entrepreneurs' leadership identity in RRR ventures will contribute to the scarce research on how they start or grow their businesses [21]. Additionally, to better explain the uniqueness of women's entrepreneurship as research inquiry, it is necessary to expand the theoretical concepts that are currently available. To empower RRR women entrepreneurs, it is necessary to understand the reasons behind their inability to leverage their skills to grow their businesses. Therefore, studying the role of RRR women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial leadership in their intention to grow their businesses is important.

Second, the stacked context of being a woman and living in RRR Australia is problematic for women entrepreneurs. Natural disasters such as the recent floods and bushfires abound in RRR Australia, and there are fewer employment opportunities for women than for men in these areas [22]. Women are trying to diversify on-farm activities, find off-farm income, and grow their ventures. Women living in rural towns are seeking to improve their economic situation through entrepreneurial activities. They pursue these actions within a rural context plagued by deep-seated cultural implications, owing to the general patriarchal norms still operating in rural Australia. Women also lack access to capital and place-based education; they are being underrepresented in business and government in their regions [23]. Compared to their urban counterparts, RRR women entrepreneurs feel isolated and navigate significant barriers in their entrepreneurship journey such as the problems caused by their distance from main centers, lack of access to entrepreneurship incubation facilities and reliable internet, lack of like-minded peers, confidence, and access to mentors [24]. A greater understanding of the link between entrepreneurial leader identity, entrepreneurial passion, and the growth intentions of RRR women can create awareness and empower women in RRR settings to take steps to develop their entrepreneurial leader identity and overcome the barriers they face.

Third, understanding the factors that encourage the venture growth intentions of RRR women will not only help to empower women but will also assist in addressing the increasing priority for the innovation agenda in Australia and elsewhere [25] to cultivate more successful, growth-oriented women-owned start-ups. Supporting women-led start-ups presents opportunities to develop the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Australia and help the country become a global leader in cultivating a diverse entrepreneurship culture. Finding ways to enhance women's entrepreneurial leadership identities, address their barriers, and support their entrepreneurial passion could be an important catalyst to increase the number of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs, which in turn could have a significant positive impact on the economic benefits that would flow from addressing these barriers to the venture growth of women-owned ventures.

This study fills a theoretical gap because although the topic areas of entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurial passion, and venture growth, respectively, have been addressed in the context of women entrepreneurship [26–29], the construct of 'entrepreneurial leadership identity' and how it relates to entrepreneurial passion and venture growth represent a novel approach in this context. Although RRR women entrepreneurs are contributing to household revenue through their off-farm entrepreneurial activity [15,30], their self-identity as entrepreneurial leaders and their passion for entrepreneurial activity as enablers of their intention to grow their ventures is unknown. Furthermore, even though much more has been discovered about what drives the growth of small businesses [31–36] and what factors influence business growth intentions [37,38], there is still a theoretical gap regarding whether RRR women entrepreneurs as leaders view business growth as desirable and feasible [39]. Finally, owing to this lack of knowledge about the growth intentions of RRR women, there is a lack of conceptualization of explanatory growth theories regarding RRR women's entrepreneurship [40,41].

This study also fills a practical gap. In view of the lack of understanding of how RRR women entrepreneurs identify with entrepreneurial leadership and how this relates to venture growth, there is an absence of initiatives focusing on the topic area of entrepreneurial

leadership as a bridge between entrepreneurship and leadership. A greater understanding of how these variables interact can inform government policy decisions regarding funding initiatives that can enhance the supply of female entrepreneurial leaders through tailor-made entrepreneurial leadership development and venture growth programs [42].

Given these gaps, the main aim of this study is to examine whether entrepreneurial leadership identity and entrepreneurial passion can forecast venture growth intention.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

2.1. Women as Entrepreneurial Leaders

Leitch and Volery [1] argue that “entrepreneurs are leaders par excellence who identify opportunities and marshal resources from various stakeholders in order to exploit these opportunities and create value”. Numerous scholars view the entrepreneur as a leader [43,44]. They argue that entrepreneurs are leaders owing to their position and are encouraged to take this role because the venture requires them to do so [45]. In the same vein, leadership is seen to be a key component of the entrepreneurial process considering that entrepreneurs cannot take advantage of opportunities without enabling individual and collective efforts [46]. Entrepreneurs must demonstrate leadership for their venture to take form. Leitch, et al. [47] argue that “entrepreneurial leadership is the leadership role performed in entrepreneurial ventures, rather than in the more general sense of an entrepreneurial style of leadership”.

Women play a significant role in the broader entrepreneurial phenomenon and economic development [48]. This is particularly true in rural and regional economies as women entrepreneurs in these contexts have a significant impact on local rural and regional economies, both in terms of income and employment [49]. Women entrepreneurs also have a crucial role to play in developing sustainable businesses [50,51]. However, there remain deeply seated biases in how women as entrepreneurs and women as leaders are viewed. Women entrepreneurs continue to experience challenges in developing their leadership roles, which compromise their efficiency and often prevent them from becoming capable leaders [52–55].

Women entrepreneurial leaders face challenges in the management of relationships with others whom they lead within and outside of their enterprises. The development and management of suitable social and human capital can assist them in developing their relationships with all stakeholders [47,56,57]. Lack of such capital has a significant moderating effect on motivations for women to be entrepreneurial leaders [56,58,59]. Compared to their male counterparts, women are less likely to pursue an entrepreneurial career because they often believe they lack the necessary entrepreneurial skills and knowledge [60,61] and are not well-versed in entrepreneurial roles [62]. Wiesner [24] confirmed these self-limiting beliefs Australian RRR women entrepreneurs espouse.

Exploring the unique disposition of RRR women entrepreneurs is therefore essential to understand how women entrepreneurs perceive different aspects of entrepreneurship and venture growth to overcome gender challenges and advance their entrepreneurial leadership careers.

2.2. Entrepreneurial Leader Identity

Scholars emphasized the importance of paying more attention to the psychological aspects of entrepreneurship, as well as the ways in which its actualization may be influenced by culture [63,64]. Furthermore, Uy, et al. [65] and Stephan [66] reported that women entrepreneurs could be impacted by psychological and resilient coping mechanisms. There have been several empirical studies demonstrating that the psychological aspect of entrepreneurs has an impact on the cognitive processes involved in conscious behavioral choices, such as entrepreneurial growth intentions [66–69]. Additionally, researchers have found strong empirical evidence that psychological factors differentiate the structure of male entrepreneurship compared to women entrepreneurship, both in terms of how they go about starting a business and the goals that they hope to achieve [9,70]. Sweida and

Reichard [71] reported that the differences between women who engage in High Growth Entrepreneurship (HGE) and those who are not engaged in HGE could be explained by differences in their respective attitudes and identities. Furthermore, even though high-growth women entrepreneurs acknowledge that discrimination is a problem and a barrier, they appear to be able to mitigate the effects of gender stereotyping by viewing these barriers as challenges to overcome. They tend to see their businesses as extensions of their positive self-image and sense of identity. Therefore, women entrepreneurship cannot be fully understood without understanding entrepreneurial leader identity, which is related to how leaders themselves perceive leadership and their leadership role [72]. However, there is an absence of research that focuses on the way women entrepreneurs perceive themselves as entrepreneurial leaders and what might be the effect of leadership self-perception on entrepreneurial behavior.

2.3. Venture Growth Intention

The concept of entrepreneurial growth intention has been variously defined in previous research, using labels such as growth intention, growth aspiration, and growth motivation [37,73,74]. Dutta and Thornhill [75] define entrepreneurial growth intention as “an entrepreneur’s goal or aspiration for the growth trajectory she or he would like the venture to follow”. Even though Sadler-Smith, et al. [76] found that one of the important characteristics of the behavior of an entrepreneurial leader is the intention to grow the enterprise, this notion has not been examined within the RRR women entrepreneurship context. Therefore, investigating the relationship between RRR women entrepreneurs’ entrepreneurial leadership identity (self-perception as an entrepreneurial leader) and their intention to grow their enterprise will enable a better understanding of the phenomenon of business growth in general, and more specifically within the underdeveloped research area of RRR women entrepreneurs.

Owing to the current lack of in-depth exploration on the topic of venture growth intention, we conducted a search for antecedents of growth intention that could combine many of the constructs found in the present literature on venture growth intentions. As a result of our search, “Entrepreneurial Leader Identity” presented itself as a novel antecedent of venture growth intention, a concept related to one’s perception of oneself as an entrepreneurial leader, as opposed to entrepreneurial identity. As outlined earlier, an entrepreneurial leader is someone who recognizes and seizes possibilities for their enterprise and selects and mobilizes stakeholders to carry out the vision set to reach the entrepreneurial goal [2]. To establish an Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, it is important to internalize and describe oneself as being both an entrepreneur and a leader [77] and to incorporate this Entrepreneurial Leader Identity into one’s existing overall identity [78].

Identity is a generic term that refers to a person’s perception of who he or she is [79]. Despite the fact that the term is used in a variety of ways and from a variety of theoretical perspectives, the common theme is that identity refers to a person’s understanding of who he or she is, and that this self-understanding underpins the person’s interpretation of events, frames their intentions, and motivation, and guides their actions [80]. Diverse viewpoints on identity, despite differing in their emphasis and assumptions, conceptualize it as consisting of a plethora of motivational notions such as self-perceptions, group memberships, beliefs, values, objectives, emotions, and habitual ways of action. Consequently, it is no coincidence that diverse motivational viewpoints refer to identity as being involved in motivation [81,82]. The concept of identity may be particularly useful because it may provide a framework capable of conceptually integrating the uniqueness of different individuals’ motivation with the shared aspects of motivation among individuals belonging to a particular group, as well as the general principles of motivation that apply to people and contexts in general [83].

According to identity theory, self-identity is made up of a collection of roles that a person plays, which in turn causes a habitual activity to support the validation of the self-concept [84]. Using this theory, it can be claimed that self-identity seeks to build consistency

between attitudes and actions [85], hence eliciting specific goals. As a result, the more critical an identity is, the more identity-congruent behaviors it evokes [86]. Several research projects, including those that have been adjusted for past behavior, have demonstrated that self-identity is an essential supplementary element within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; [87]) for predicting both intentions and behaviors, e.g., [88–90]. The TPB posits that individuals plan their behavior, and such human behavior is preceded by an individual's intentions to engage in a particular behavior. Accordingly, intention is an accurate predictor of planned behavior.

In a meta-analysis, Rise, et al. [91] revealed that self-identity explained a considerable amount of additional variance in intentions after correcting for historical behavior. There is rising evidence to support the inclusion of identity—both personal and social—in the TPB to predict intentions e.g., [91–94]. Theoretically, this advancement marks the incorporation of key concepts from social identity theory [95,96] and identity theory [97,98] into the TPB to predict intentions. When a particular social identity serves as the primary basis for self-conception, an individual's behavior becomes group-based and influenced by the norms of that social category or group. The process of categorizing oneself in terms of a specific social identity highlights similarities between the self and other ingroup members and emphasizes disparities between the self and outgroup members. As a result, the behavior and expectations of other group members will serve as a guide for appropriate behavior, mainly when that social identity is fundamental to the self-concept.

Cognitive interpretations of leadership experiences influence the development of a leader's self-identity. If a person's self-image matches his or her impression of a leader [77], or if he or she can display the competencies of a prototypical leader, he or she is more likely to identify as a leader [99]. The ability to identify as a leader improves when one experiences another leader with whom one can identify. Leadership experiences provide an opportunity to emulate observed leadership behaviors. According to Lord and Hall [100], leader identity is a type of cognitive schema that serves as a reservoir for information and knowledge associated with a leadership role. It also guides an individual's behavior and interactions in leadership roles and processes [101]. Therefore, it is argued that Entrepreneurial Leader Identity guides the entrepreneurial leader in the entrepreneurial process and behavior, including venture growth process and behavior.

2.4. Entrepreneurial Passion

Passion can be defined as a strong inclination towards a self-defining activity that people love, consider significant, and to which they commit time and effort [102]. Passion is an essential part of entrepreneurship; it can play an important role in the entrepreneurial process, from starting a business to its outcome, including business growth and the behavior of entrepreneurs [103–105]. Moreover, it is associated with positive sentiments and attitudes towards entrepreneurial activities vital to the self-identity of an entrepreneur [106,107]. Passion strengthens motivation and stimulates individuals to continue through the difficulties associated with accomplishing complex tasks [107]. Passion will therefore have a positive impact on business growth [108].

Entrepreneurial passion (EP) can be defined as an entrepreneur's intense positive feelings towards a particular entrepreneurial activity or "domain" that they are engaged in, and which relates to their entrepreneurial venture, such as inventing, founding, or developing, and correlating with the activity or "domain" as central to their self-identity [109].

Passion influences critical outcomes such as creativity in developing entrepreneurial intentions [110], entrepreneurial persistence [103], employees' commitment [111], entrepreneurial performance [112], technological innovation [113], strategic change [114], and venture investment [115]. Furthermore, researchers have shown that EP is positively associated with entrepreneurial intention [106,116,117]. Some researchers have also explored the relationship between EP and venture growth e.g., [108,118–120]. Even though the literature explores the relationship between EP and entrepreneurial intention and the relationship between EP and venture growth, the relationship between EP and growth

intention is still an understudied research area with no existing research in the RRR women entrepreneurship context.

Passion motivates people to overcome obstacles when accomplishing complex tasks [107], which influences business growth positively [120]. Because this is a complex issue, it will be beneficial to understand the antecedents that lead to EP. In their exploration of this question, scholars have identified several personal and social aspects that contribute to entrepreneurial passion. Besides its benefits, researchers have focused more on outcomes than on antecedents. In their review, Newman, et al. [121] found that only 25 of the 60 empirical research papers published on entrepreneurial passion examined its antecedents. The origin of passion is not yet completely understood; therefore, an exploration of the antecedents of entrepreneurial passion is needed. According to Webb, et al. [122], examining entrepreneurial identities and identity theory may provide intriguing new insights into the entrepreneurship process. An identity theory lens can illuminate the origins of passion and the factors that influence its growth.

According to a growing body of research, passion is an important part of entrepreneurship, and it plays a substantial impact on the business formation process and its outcomes [110,117,123–125]. Researchers have argued that EP is an important personal trait that drives people to start businesses [126,127]. Passion has been considered by researchers to be a trait-like attribute that influences the entrepreneurial process via more proximal and situation-specific motivational elements [106,108].

3. Hypothesis Development

A growing body of research shows that self-identity is an important predictor of behavioral intentions [89,128–131]. Although Sparks and Shepherd [132] suggested that self-identity should influence intentions through attitudes, they discovered that green consumers' identity was an independent predictor of intentions to purchase organic products. It was argued that entrepreneurial identity was a good determinant of intentionality [133]. Early literature also indicates a positive relationship between entrepreneurial self-identity and entrepreneurial intentions [90,134–136]. Recently, Ndofirepi [137] found that entrepreneurial self-identity had a direct statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intention. Because the construct 'entrepreneurial leadership identity' has not been examined in the RRR women entrepreneurship context, the first research question explored in this paper is: What is the relationship between the Entrepreneurial Leader Identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs and their venture growth intentions? Even though it has not been tested, it could be argued that the Entrepreneurial Leader Identity of women entrepreneurs in the RRR context is likely to be positively related to venture growth intention. The first hypothesis tested is

H1. *The Entrepreneurial Leader Identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs is positively related to their venture growth intentions.*

Identity theory acknowledges that taking into account other people's perspectives and reactions to oneself can significantly impact one's motivation and self-construal [138,139]. When considering the theory of identity, past researchers have examined the relationship between identity and passion in the context of entrepreneurship and found that entrepreneurial identity is positively associated with harmonic entrepreneurial passion [107,140]. Although entrepreneurship scholars have explored the linkage between identity and passion from various perspectives, there is still more to explore. Surprisingly, literature on EP has mainly overlooked other identities in entrepreneurship, such as the leader identity of entrepreneurs, even though Entrepreneurial Leader Identity has the potential to be associated with EP. Nevertheless, researchers have found a close relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial passion. For example, when studying women entrepreneurs, Dean and Ford [141] found that entrepreneurial leadership is associated with passion. Because there is an absence of research examining these issues within the RRR women entrepreneurship context, these arguments are indicative of a potential positive relationship between Entrepreneurial

Leader Identity and entrepreneurial passion. Therefore, our second research question examined in this paper is: Is there a positive relationship between the Entrepreneurial Leader Identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs and their EP. The following hypothesis will inform this research question.

H2. *The Entrepreneurial Leader Identity of RRR women entrepreneurs is positively related to their entrepreneurial passion.*

There are some empirical evidence that EP has a favorable impact on entrepreneurial behavior and performance [104,107,127]. A study conducted in Australia found that EP has a positive and significant impact on entrepreneurial success [142]. EP has been shown to be a key motivator of entrepreneurial behavior because having intense good feelings have been linked to identities [125,126,140]. Recent research, for example, has shown that EP is directly related to a wide range of entrepreneurial outcomes, including venture growth and performance, access to finance, and entrepreneurial persistence e.g., [118,143,144].

Despite substantial advances in understanding the nature and impact of EP, one of the key concerns remains unanswered: whether EP is related to venture growth intention. Given its importance in the entrepreneurial process, it is critical to understand how EP relates to entrepreneurial growth intention. There is strong evidence that passion and growth intention could be associated, as scholars have demonstrated that EP is associated with entrepreneurial intention. Some researchers have examined the relationship between EP and entrepreneurial intention and found that there was empirical evidence to support this notion [110,145]. Moreover, researchers have found that EP and entrepreneurial intention have an indirect positive relationship [146,147]. In other research domains, researchers have found a positive relationship between passion and intention. For example, the passion for speed has a positive impact on speeding behavioral intention [148], and customers' passion has been linked to their behavioral intention [149]. Our third research question, therefore asks: What is the relationship between the EP of RRR women entrepreneurs and their venture growth intention? The following hypothesis will inform this research question.

H3. *The entrepreneurial passion of RRR women entrepreneurs is positively related to their venture growth intention.*

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The data were collected from women entrepreneurs located in RRR Australia. The rationale for focusing on this group was discussed in the Introduction. An online survey was conducted to measure the entrepreneurial leadership and venture growth intention of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs. Purposive sampling was employed with respondents recruited in two tranches through non-probability snowball sampling. First, an email invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 750 women entrepreneurs subscribed to the only Australia-wide women entrepreneurship development program, The WiRE Program. This was followed up with an email to several women associations operating in RRR Australia, requesting these associations to invite women entrepreneurs in their association to participate in the survey. Potential respondents were invited to click on a survey link. One-hundred-and-nine survey responses were received after multiple reminders. Ten respondents were excluded due to missing data, which left 99 usable surveys. We suspect we could have achieved a higher response rate if Australia had not been struggling with the aftermaths of COVID and extreme flooding in rural areas at the time of distributing the survey, which significantly negatively impacted especially small businesses.

4.2. Data Collection Tools

The survey instrument was pretested with 10 participants in the study area to check the validity and appropriateness of wording, formatting, and sequencing of questions. The questions were refined based on the pilot outcomes. Three scales were utilized in this study

to measure the constructs: Entrepreneurial Leader Identity (ELI), Entrepreneurial Passion (EP) and Venture Growth Intention (GI). The construct ELI was measured by four items adapted from [150]: “Developing and nurturing a venture/business is an important part of who I am (EL1)”, “I think of myself as an entrepreneur (EL2)”, “I think of myself as a leader (EL3)” and “When I describe myself, I would include the word leader (EL4)”.

To measure EP, we drew on the four items of scale from Cardon, Gregoire, Stevens and Patel [111]. However, one item was dropped after assessing the measurement model due to low factor loading. The three items utilized were: Nurturing a new venture/business/initiative through its emerging success is enjoyable (PA1)”, “It is exciting to identify unmet market gap (PA2)” and “Inventing new solutions to problems is an important element of who I am (PA3)”; The excluded item was “Assembling the right people to work with me or my business is exciting (PA4)”.

A single item, “My intention is to grow my venture as large as possible”, measured GI. The scale was adapted from Edelman, Brush, Manolova and Greene [37]. Measurement items of all the scales were measured by 5-point Likert scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

The reliability and validity of measurement scales are discussed in Section 5.3 measurement model.

4.3. Data Analysis Method

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is a multivariate method for testing and evaluating multivariate causal relationships. SEM examines direct and indirect effects on hypothesized causal relations. In general, there are two approaches to SEM: covariance-based and component-based SEM. A large sample is needed to perform covariance-based SEM, whereas component-based SEM can be performed on a small sample. As our study hypothesized multivariate causal relations and has a small sample size, with the help of Software Smart PLS 3 [151], component-based partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was applied to test the relationship among the study constructs ELI, EP, and GI. The method was chosen because our study has a small sample size, and PLS-SEM works better with a small sample size compared to CB-SEM. Besides, PLS-SEM has more flexible requirements concerning sample distribution and measurement scales [152].

PLS-SEM requires two steps to be completed. The measurement model should be evaluated in the first step to ensure its validity. In the second step, the hypothesized relationship should be tested, and the measurement model should be evaluated to ensure its validity. Following the established guidelines for PLS-SEM [153,154], both the measurement model and the structural equation model were validated in our study. The measurement model was evaluated by assessing reliability and validity prior to evaluating the structural model [152]. Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to evaluate the reliability of the constructs. Discriminant validity was assessed by the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotriat-Monotrait ratio of correlation [155]. Convergent validity was assessed by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The structural model was assessed based on explained variance (R2), predictive relevance (Q2), the significance of paths [155], and bootstrapping generated 5000 samples to compute T-values to test the model, as Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt [152] suggested.

4.4. Assessing the Common Method Bias

Common method bias is the bias produced in estimates due to the common method used to assess both independent and dependent variables. When surveys collect data on both independent and dependent variables simultaneously, the estimated effect of one variable on another may be skewed by common method variance; that is, systematic variance shared among the variables introduced into the measures by the measurement method rather than the theoretical constructs being measured [156]. In this study, common method bias was assessed by Harman’s single factor test [157].

5. Results and Key Findings

5.1. Common Method Bias

Harman's single factor test revealed that a single factor explains 48.6 per cent of the variance, which is less than 50 percent, suggesting that common method bias is not a concern for this study [156,157].

5.2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Only 18.4% of respondents were younger than 40 years old. This reflects the trend of young people, especially young women, leaving rural areas in Australia. A total of 85% of respondents possessed post-secondary school qualifications, including 52.5% of women possessing either a post-graduate diploma (14.1%) or postgraduate degree (38.4%). More than two-thirds of those surveyed were the sole proprietors of their businesses. A third of the businesses owned by respondents were family-owned. More than two-thirds of those surveyed said their businesses had no employees other than the owner(s). At least 44% of business were more than three years old, and 31% of businesses were under a year old. Nearly 37% of respondents reported that their business made a profit in the last fiscal year. Additionally, 77% of the respondents reported that they have a network of entrepreneurial friends/colleagues with whom to discuss their excitement and concerns related to their entrepreneurial vision.

5.3. Measurement Model

The measurement model is the component of the PLS model that investigates the relationship between latent variables and their measures. Prior to structural modelling of latent variables, it was necessary to evaluate the measurement model for its quality (reliability and validity). The results below demonstrate the quality of the measurement model.

As shown in Table 1, all factor loadings are greater than the threshold value of 0.6 [157]. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were higher than the recommended value of 0.700 [158]. Cronbach's alpha of each construct exceeded the 0.700 thresholds. These values ascertained the reliability of the measurements. Convergent validity was acceptable because the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was over 0.500. Results established discriminant validity (shown in Table 2) as the square root of the AVEs was higher than the inter-construct correlations among the constructs [159]. Discriminant validity was confirmed by the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation with values below the threshold of 0.90 [155]; hence, discriminant validity was established (see Table 2). These findings established the validity of measurement.

Table 1. Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Validity.

	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
EL1	0.836	0.894	0.927	0.759
EL2	0.890			
EL3	0.897			
EL4	0.863			
PA1	0.826	0.739	0.842	0.641
PA2	0.863			
PA3	0.705			
GI	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker criterion and Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio.

	GI	ELI	PA
GI	1.000		
ELI	0.644 (0.679)	0.871	
PA	0.291 (0.309)	0.429 (0.472)	0.801

Values inside the brackets are Hetrotrait-Monotrait ratios.

5.4. Structural Model

After assurance of our measurement quality, we assessed the structural model to test our hypothesis. Table 3 shows the results of the structural model (Figure 1) assessment using 5000 bootstrap samples. The results indicate that entrepreneurial leadership intention had a positive and significant relationship with both entrepreneurial passion ($\beta = 0.429$, $T = 4.064$, $p = 0.000$) and venture growth intention ($\beta = 0.636$, $T = 7.203$, $p = 0.000$). This finding gave us the evidence to accept the hypotheses H1 and H2. However, entrepreneurial passion had a positive but non-significant relationship with venture growth intention ($\beta = 0.018$, $T = 0.186$, $p = 0.853$). This finding suggested that the evidence was not sufficient to support our hypothesis H3. To ascertain these results from the model, we assessed the model's explanatory capacity and effect size of independent variables on dependent variables and their predictive relevance as follows:

The R2 value, the explained variance of the dependent constructs, was used to assess the structural model's explanatory capacity [160]. R2 values for entrepreneurial passion and venture growth intention were 0.184 and 0.415, respectively, above the acceptable value of 0.10 [161].

After the proposed model had been evaluated and confirmed, the next step was to see how removing a specific predictor construct affected the R2 value of an endogenous construct. As a result, we investigated the magnitude of the effects (f^2 ; [160]). On the one hand, expert user results showed that Entrepreneurial Leader Identity had a large effect size on venture growth intention ($f^2 = 0.563$) and a moderate effect size on entrepreneurial passion ($f^2 = 0.226$). On the other hand, passion had a nonsignificant impact on intention ($f^2 = 0.000$).

Finally, the current study tested the model's predictive relevance using Stone-Geisser's Q2 [160]. The results showed that all Q2 values were above zero (see Table 3), indicating that the models had predictive relevance.

Table 3. Structural model evaluation.

	β	T	p	f^2
ELI→GI	0.636	7.203	0.000	0.563
ELI→PA	0.429	4.064	0.000	0.226
PA→GI	0.018	0.186	0.853	0.000
	R2	Q2		
GI	0.415	0.374		
PA	0.184	0.072		

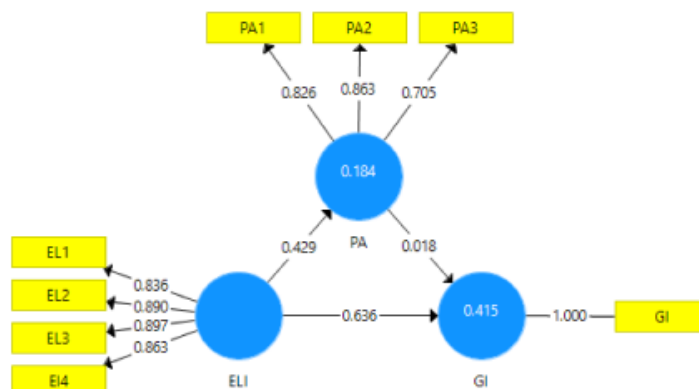


Figure 1. Structural Model.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In view of the scant research on how women entrepreneurs regard themselves as entrepreneurial leaders, how entrepreneurial self-perceptions may impact on venture growth intentions, and to expand the understanding of antecedents of growth intentions, we proposed the concept of Entrepreneurial Leader Identity as a novel antecedent of venture growth intention. The conceptual model proposed in this paper aimed to test Entrepreneurial Leader Identity and its relationship with growth intention and entrepreneurial passion.

6.1. Discussion

With regard to the role that Entrepreneurial Leader Identity plays in Australian RRR women entrepreneurs' venture growth intentions, the results revealed that RRR women who possess a strong Entrepreneurial Leader Identity have a higher intention to grow their business. These results are supportive of the findings of Rise, Sheeran and Hukkelberg [91] in a meta-analysis that self-identity explained a considerable amount of additional variance in intentions. The results are also supportive of the rising evidence to support the inclusion of identity in the Theory of Planned Behavior to predict intentions e.g., [92–94].

Researchers in the field of entrepreneurship have investigated the relationship between identity and passion from various perspectives, e.g., [118,142,145] but have overlooked the possibility of a relationship between passion and a variety of entrepreneurial identities of an entrepreneur, one of which is Entrepreneurial Leader Identity. Murnieks, Mosakowski and Cardon [107] have argued that entrepreneurial experiences in the context of passion can impact an entrepreneur's identity and that this relationship may be reciprocal. We extended this line of argument and examined this link between Entrepreneurial Leader Identity and the entrepreneurial passion of RRR women entrepreneurs and found a significantly positive relationship. This finding is supportive of other research arguing that identities could affect passion [126,162]. Furthermore, Vallerand, et al. [163] and Cardon, Wincent, Singh and Drnovsek [126] argue that passion experiences are anchored in self-defining activities that are important for one's identity. Others have found a close relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial passion within the context of women entrepreneurship [141].

Despite significant progress in understanding the nature and impact of EP, the key question of whether the EP of RRR women entrepreneurs influences their venture growth intention remains unanswered. We have examined the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. Partial least square SEM of survey responses from RRR women entrepreneurs produced thought-provoking results. According to these results, there is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial

passion and venture growth intention of RRR women entrepreneurs. This finding does not support previous findings that assert that passion is a critical predictor of behavioral intentions [148,164]. Others have linked entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intentions [110,145]. In addition, researchers have discovered an indirect, positive relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial intention [146,147]. Similar results were reported in other fields of study. For example, customers' passion is linked to their behavioral intention [149], and a passion for speed positively impacts speeding behavior [148]. In addition, Baum and Locke [108] found that a passion for work has an impact on venture growth through an entrepreneur's growth goals (which is similar to growth intentions).

A possible reason for our finding could be that passion has an indirect effect on growth intentions [146,147] instead of having a direct effect. Another explanation could lie in the fact that experiencing passion during the entrepreneurial process could affect the degree of importance RRR women entrepreneurs assign to growth events, and in this sample RRR women entrepreneurs may not assign adequate importance to growing their ventures. Because our research did not study an indirect path or venture growth importance, we suggest further examination of these concepts in the context of RRR women entrepreneurship.

6.2. Conclusions

By introducing the concept of Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, we delved into the nexus between Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, Entrepreneurial Passion, and Venture Growth Intention of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs. Although researchers have attempted to understand entrepreneurship from various perspectives, including entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurship cannot be fully understood without first understanding Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, which is related to how leaders perceive leadership [72,165]. Even though some researchers have studied Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, e.g., [165,166], these studies were qualitative in nature and have only explored how entrepreneurs develop their Entrepreneurial Leader Identity. Our approach can therefore be used in future empirical studies to understand the outcomes of Entrepreneurial Leader Identity better.

By quantitatively examining the effect of Entrepreneurship Leadership Identity on entrepreneurial passion and venture growth intentions and the link between entrepreneurial passion and venture growth intention, our research added another stepping stone in the attempt to better understand the role of identity in entrepreneurship in general and in entrepreneurial leadership specifically, especially in the context of RRR women entrepreneurship. This first attempt to quantify the construct 'Entrepreneurial Leader Identity' and link it to entrepreneurial passion and venture growth intention could provide researchers with a new avenue to explore entrepreneurship and the phenomenon of venture growth.

The intention to grow an enterprise and make it a sustainable business is a significant feature of entrepreneurial leaders' behavior [76]. Although past research has identified factors influencing business growth intentions [37,38], our study has shone light on the Australia RRR women entrepreneurship context. We proposed the concept of Entrepreneurial Leader Identity as a novel antecedent of venture growth intention to increase an understanding of the antecedents of growth intentions. Upon confirmation of this positive relationship, we have paved the way to better understand the business growth phenomenon within this context.

Even though we have measured venture growth intention and not "actual" growth, numerous studies have found that the former is a direct predictor of actual growth. Therefore, the results of our study also have practical implications for growing and sustaining businesses. Furthermore, there is general agreement that one's identity can be formed, developed and sustained through capacity building, training, education and especially learning-by-doing (experiential learning) practices [60,167–174].

In the RRR context where women entrepreneurs face numerous unique challenges such as distance, a male-dominated context, a lack of mentors, networks and learning-by-doing capacity-building programs, it could be very difficult for these women to strengthen

their entrepreneurial leadership identities. Capacity-building strategies that facilitate direct interactions with mentors or like-minded peers, successful entrepreneurs, and experts [29,175,176] can encourage a woman's decision to embrace a view of herself as an entrepreneur and leader [177]. However, values such as risk taking and profit motivation that are associated with entrepreneurial role models are often rejected by women entrepreneurs [178] and they push back against gendered representations of entrepreneurship. This could be because within the context of rural communities, 'place' (as in being 'rural') assumes a key role in the formation of identity since the boundaries of geographical space are much clearer defined in comparison with urban settings. Community is built through greater reliance on institutions, organizations and activities that are all carried out within a certain geographical location. As such, community is constructed on a sense of neighborliness and place is very often inseparable from an individuals' identity and the life they lead in terms of a sense of belonging [179].

We therefore argue that within a context of isolation that accompanies RRR Australia, online interactive learning-by-doing capacity-building programs and activities that offer a safe space for RRR women entrepreneurs to interact and engage with like-minded peers, mentors, experts and other successful RRR entrepreneurs and female leaders, offer tremendous opportunities for these women to develop their entrepreneurial leadership identity. In addition, opportunities to practice start-up initiatives, goal accountability and entrepreneurial responsibilities could assist in developing an entrepreneurial leadership identity. By enabling effective collaborative peer-learning behaviors, government and entrepreneurship development agencies can significantly contribute to increase the individual competence and self-confidence of RRR women entrepreneurs to be successful entrepreneurs [24,167,174,180].

Despite the positive contribution our findings make to existing entrepreneurial leadership studies, our study has some limitations. First, although there is a significant relationship between the Entrepreneurial Leader Identity of RRR women entrepreneurs and their growth intentions, our model predicts only 41% variation in growth intention, which indicates that additional factors influencing growth intention are unknown. Previous researchers applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to demonstrate that factors such as attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms are predictors of growth intentions. Combining the TPB with our model has the potential to explain more variation in growth intentions. For this reason, we suggest examining such a combined model in future research.

Second, although there is the possibility of a bidirectional relationship between entrepreneurial passion and Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, our study did not examine the bidirectional relation. There is the possibility that when RRR women entrepreneurs are more passionate, they develop their entrepreneurial identity more strongly. Thus, studying the bidirectional relationship in future research will be a worthwhile research path.

Third, due to the cross-sectional nature of our study, even though the hypotheses we tested in our research were theoretically derived, causality could not be established. We recommend that future studies examine the nexus between the three constructs by designing longitudinal and experimental studies to establish causality.

Fourth, the quantitative findings presented in this paper ought to be extended to include qualitative research to explore the dynamics and reasons behind the nonsignificant relationship between entrepreneurial passion and venture growth intention of RRR women entrepreneurs reported in this paper.

Finally, the findings of our study are based on the specific context of RRR women entrepreneurship, which might be different to other contexts. Hence further studies should test the measurement constructs in other contexts.

Despite these limitations, we believe that introducing the novel construct Entrepreneurial Leader Identity and testing its role in venture growth intention and entrepreneurial passion will stimulate new research in this critical and germane area of inquiry. Profitable but also sustainable businesses are imperative to enhance the well-being of RRR women

entrepreneurs; increase the number of RRR women-owned businesses, attain a more equal dispensation of wealth, and clear the way for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such this study adds to the research on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) linked to social equity, in the domains of gender equality (SDG 5) and inequalities reduction (SDG 10). The SDGs cannot be achieved and will not be sustainable without increasing women's involvement and participation in the economy and in particular new value creation through self-employment and associated venture growth [181].

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3.2 Summary

Chapter 3 presented the empirical findings from the first research study, titled ‘When entrepreneurial leadership identity and passion meet venture growth intention’. By integrating the theoretical framework that was established in Chapter 2, this chapter provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between EL identity, passion and venture growth intentions. The rigorous data analysis partially supported the proposed hypotheses, revealing a significant and positive relationship between EL identity, passion and growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs. However, unlike expectations, the study found a non-significant relationship between passion and growth intentions.

These findings have practical implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers, offering a deeper understanding of EL and guiding the development of strategies to foster venture growth. Transitioning to Chapter 4, which centres on the relationship between EL identity, EL competencies, and venture growth intentions, the aim is to further explore the multifaceted nature of EL and its implications for venture success. Chapter 3 contributed significantly to addressing the gap between theory and practice, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of EL and paving the way for continued exploration in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 4: PAPER 2 – THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY, ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY AND VENTURE GROWTH INTENTIONS OF WOMEN IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 builds upon the groundwork established in Chapter 1, which outlined the research objectives and methodology, and Chapter 2, which provided an extensive literature review and theoretical framework. Using the empirical findings from Chapter 3, this chapter titled ‘The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia’ delves deeper into the relationships between EL identity, competency and venture growth intentions. The research study, submitted to the *Journal PLOS ONE*, presented a comprehensive analysis of these relationships, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of entrepreneurship in rural contexts. The chapter begins by introducing the research study’s objectives and discussing the employed research methodology. Then, it presents and analyses the empirical findings, highlighting the interplay between EL identity, competency and venture growth intentions. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflective analysis of the implications of these findings, emphasising their significance for academic research and practical applications in the field of entrepreneurship. Overall, this chapter contributes to the understanding of factors that influence the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in rural Australia, addressing the gap between theory and practice and providing actionable insights for supporting entrepreneurial endeavours in these contexts.

PLOS ONE

The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia --Manuscript Draft--

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Full Title:	The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia
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Corresponding Author:	Purushottam Dhakal University of Southern Queensland Toowoomba, QLD AUSTRALIA
Keywords:	women entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial leader identity; entrepreneurial leadership competency; venture growth intentions
Abstract:	Cultivating business growth intentions in rural, regional, and remote women entrepreneurs is crucial, considering the unique challenges they face in rural areas. The growth intentions of rural, regional, and remote women entrepreneurs remain understudied. This study pioneers research on the interplay between entrepreneurial leadership competency, identity, and growth intentions of rural, regional, and remote Australian women. We surveyed rural, regional, and remote women entrepreneurs in Queensland, Australia, using structural equation modeling for analysis. Results revealed a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity, business growth intentions, and entrepreneurial leadership competency. Moreover, entrepreneurial leadership competency positively correlated with growth intentions. The study indicated that entrepreneurial leadership competency partially mediates the link between identity and growth intentions. This research addresses a theoretical gap by introducing a new model showcasing the relationships between entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency, and venture growth intentions. From a practical standpoint, our findings strengthen the business case for improving tailor-made rural, regional, and remote entrepreneurial development programs.
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Additional data availability information:	

Cover Letter

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

I am pleased to submit our research paper titled " The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia " for consideration in the Journal PLOS ONE.

Within the emerging domain of entrepreneurial leadership research, rural women entrepreneurs' issues have been largely ignored. This study aims to examine the interplay between entrepreneurial leadership competency, entrepreneurial leader identity and growth intentions of rural women entrepreneurs. This is done within the stacked context of being a woman entrepreneur, and in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia. This unique study draws upon a cross-sectional survey dataset of 99 women entrepreneurs, employing a partial least square structural equation model. The study has found a positive relationship between their entrepreneurial leader identity on the one hand and their business growth intentions and entrepreneurial leadership competencies on the other. A positive relationship between entrepreneurial leadership competency and growth intentions was also found. Moreover, the results indicated that their entrepreneurial leadership competency partially mediates the link between their entrepreneurial leader identity and business growth intentions. The study fills a theoretical gap by advancing the measurement of self-perceived entrepreneurial leadership and by developing a new model that shows the relationships between EL identity, EL competency, and venture growth intentions. From a practical perspective, our study advances the business case for improving the design of tailor-made rural, regional and remote entrepreneurial development programs.

This research paper is our original unpublished work, and it has not been submitted to any other journal for reviews. We confirm that neither the manuscript nor any parts of its content are currently under consideration or published in another journal. All authors have approved the manuscript and agree with its submission to the Journal PLOS ONE.

In consideration of potential handling, we kindly recommend Dr. Kashif Ali as the academic editor to oversee this manuscript.

Thank you for considering our research paper for publication. We look forward to your favourable response.

Sincerely,

Purushottam Dhakal

1 **Title: The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity,**
2 **entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions**
3 **of women in rural Australia**

4 **Short Title: Entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial**
5 **leadership competency and venture growth intentions**

6

7

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15

16 **Abstract**

17 Cultivating business growth intentions in rural, regional, and remote women
18 entrepreneurs is crucial, considering the unique challenges they face in rural areas. The
19 growth intentions of rural, regional, and remote women entrepreneurs remain
20 understudied. This study pioneers research on the interplay between entrepreneurial
21 leadership competency, identity, and growth intentions of rural, regional, and remote
22 Australian women. We surveyed rural, regional, and remote women entrepreneurs in
23 Queensland, Australia, using structural equation modeling for analysis. Results revealed
24 a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity, business growth
25 intentions, and entrepreneurial leadership competency. Moreover, entrepreneurial
26 leadership competency positively correlated with growth intentions. The study indicated
27 that entrepreneurial leadership competency partially mediates the link between identity
28 and growth intentions. This research addresses a theoretical gap by introducing a new
29 model showcasing the relationships between entrepreneurial leadership identity,
30 entrepreneurial leadership competency, and venture growth intentions. From a practical
31 standpoint, our findings strengthen the business case for improving tailor-made rural,
32 regional, and remote entrepreneurial development programs.

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39 **Introduction**

40 Examining the impact of rural Australian female founders' entrepreneurial leadership
41 (EL) identity and EL competency on their venture growth intentions is important for
42 several reasons. First, women entrepreneurship has become a critical component of
43 economic development in many regions, and the growth of women-led businesses can
44 have a significant impact on the economic growth of a region, especially in rural areas
45 [1]. However, the phenomenon of business growth has been less explored in female-
46 founded ventures [2], particularly in rural Australian female-founded ventures. It is
47 important to understand the factors influencing the growth intentions of female founders
48 in rural regions owing to the unique challenges and barriers these female founders face.
49 Female founders in rural Australia areas face limited job opportunities compared to their
50 urban and male counterparts, prompting them to seek entrepreneurial off-farm income
51 and diversify on-farm activities, often amidst natural disasters like flooding and bushfires
52 [3]. They also face cultural barriers due to male-dominated norms, limited access to
53 capital, and insufficient local business education, leading to their under-representation in
54 business and government [4, 5]. They face the challenge of distance to main centers and
55 the lack of reliable internet; access to entrepreneurship development services; like-
56 minded peers, networks, mentors; and confidence [6, 7]. Women in these areas,
57 therefore, need to constantly act not only as entrepreneurs but also as entrepreneurial
58 leaders by creating, identifying, and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities and add
59 value through enacting the challenges of communicating a vision and influencing others
60 to help them realize it [8-12]. This study provides insights into how they can develop
61 their EL identity and competencies to become stronger entrepreneurial leaders in their
62 business and communities.

63 Second, because entrepreneurial leadership is a critical factor in the success of a
64 venture [13], by studying the impact of entrepreneurial leadership identity and
65 competency on venture growth intentions, we can better understand the factors that
66 contribute to venture success.

67 Third, there is a need to better understand the role of entrepreneurial leadership
68 identity and competency in fostering innovation and creativity in rural areas, which can
69 offer unique opportunities for innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship, promoting the
70 growth of women-led ventures and supporting economic development in rural and
71 regional areas [9, 14].

72 Finally, understanding the role of entrepreneurial leadership identity and
73 competency in promoting the growth of women-led ventures in rural areas can help to
74 develop targeted interventions that can support gender diversity in entrepreneurship [15].

75 This study fills several research gaps. Firstly, there is limited research regarding
76 the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and venture growth intentions of
77 women entrepreneurs in rural, regional, and remote Australia. Additionally, less than six
78 percent of all entrepreneurship research focuses on women entrepreneurs [16], making it
79 a theoretical contribution to the domain of RRR women entrepreneurs. This study fills
80 this gap by developing a new model that shows the relationships between EL identity, EL
81 competency, and venture growth intentions.

82 Secondly, the growth intentions of rural female founders is understudied and
83 challenging, given the combined factors of gender and rural location. Understanding the
84 relationship between EL identity, competencies, and venture growth intentions is crucial,
85 given the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these entrepreneurs.

86 Thirdly, this study fills a gap in the literature on entrepreneurial leadership (EL)
87 by focusing specifically on RRR women's EL, as this is the first study to examine the
88 relationship between EL competency, EL identity, and growth intentions in this context.

89 Fourthly, our study fills a research gap on the measurement of EL by adapting the
90 initial scale of Bagheri and Harrison (17) to enable RRR women entrepreneurs to reflect
91 on their own EL competency, rather than relying on followers' perspectives, which is the
92 approach followed in other studies. This approach provides new insights into
93 measuring EL in a RRR setting and for women entrepreneurs.

94 Finally, this study fills a gap in understanding the business growth phenomenon
95 of women entrepreneurs to a greater extent [16]. This enhanced understanding helps build
96 the business case for government and entrepreneurship development agencies to fund
97 practical tailormade rural women EL development programs in which participants could
98 enhance their competencies and develop their EL identities and venture growth intentions.

99 The primary objective of this study is to investigate the interplay between
100 entrepreneurial leader identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency, and the venture
101 growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural, regional, and remote areas of
102 Australia. The study substantiates a noteworthy connection between these constructs.

103 **Hypothesis**

104 Building on Harrison, Leitch (18) and Dhakal, Wiesner (7), we argue that contextualizing
105 gender is essential to understanding entrepreneurial leadership (EL) in its entirety.
106 Examining EL separately from its context is flawed as it fails to consider how the context
107 shapes the opportunities and challenges experienced by women entrepreneurs due to
108 spatial and institutional norms [19].

109 Some researchers argue that the desire to grow a business is inherent in
110 entrepreneurs [20], but it has been shown that not all entrepreneurs intend to grow their
111 business, especially women entrepreneurs [21, 22]. Women-owned businesses also tend
112 to have lower survival rates, be less profitable, and employ fewer staff than those owned
113 by men [23, 24], partly due to socialization influences on decision-making and work-
114 family pressures [2, 25-27]. Additionally, contextual variables such as low self-efficacy
115 and undervaluation of their work can influence women entrepreneurs to start businesses
116 in low-growth industries and opt against scaling their ventures [28, 29]. Thus, the
117 intentions to grow a business often differs between male and female founders.

118 Shepherd and Haynie (30) found that an entrepreneur's identity is tied to decisions
119 such as the growth of established ventures. EL Identity refers to one's perception of
120 oneself as an entrepreneurial leader, distinct from one's identity as an entrepreneur [7].
121 Identity significantly influences behavior and is an integral part of the process of
122 becoming a leader [31, 32].

123 In view of these assertions, the first research question we posed was whether the
124 'EL identity' of RRR women entrepreneurs impacts their intentions to grow their
125 ventures. Our first hypothesis tested was, therefore:

126 *H1: The entrepreneurial leader identity of women entrepreneurs of RRR Australia*
127 *positively affects venture growth intentions.*

128 This hypothesis is rooted in the idea that self-belief of RRR women entrepreneurs
129 in their ability to perform specific tasks (Self-efficacy theory), observing and modelling
130 the behavior of others (Social cognitive theory); and deriving a sense of meaning and
131 purpose from their identity as a leader (Identity theory), can all have a significant impact
132 on setting ambitious goals and pursuing venture growth with confidence and
133 determination [33-35].

134 Moreover, the development of a leader's identity, or sense of self, is unavoidable
135 in leadership development [36]. In several studies, self-identity has been a predictor of
136 intentions and actions, including those that account for prior behavior [e.g. 37, 38, 39].
137 Lord and Hall (40) assert that the identity of a leader aids in developing leadership
138 competencies and the latter may help women entrepreneurs who possess strong
139 entrepreneurial leadership competency to better utilize their skills and knowledge to drive
140 venture growth. Leader identity also inspires a person to build leadership competency
141 [41], and Miscenko, Guenter (42) found a positive relationship between leader identity
142 and leadership competency.

143 Therefore, the second research question we posed was whether 'EL identity'
144 impacts the 'EL competency' of RRR women entrepreneurs. Our second hypothesis was,
145 therefore,

146 *H2: The EL identity of RRR women positively affects their EL competency.*

147 This hypothesis draws on the Human Capital Theory [43] which suggests that an
148 individual's skills, knowledge, and experience are critical determinants of their
149 productivity and success.

150 Researchers have studied various competencies in the context of
151 entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurial competencies, management competencies,
152 social competencies, emotional competencies and leadership competencies [44-46].
153 These competencies have been linked to entrepreneurial growth and performance;
154 specifically, the perception of competencies has been found to impact intentions [47, 48].
155 Other studies link entrepreneurial competencies and leadership competencies to
156 entrepreneurial intentions [44, 49-51]. Moreover, researchers have found a positive
157 relationship between competencies and growth aspirations [52-55]. Traditionally,
158 researchers have studied entrepreneurial competencies and leadership competencies

159 separately, however more recently, they have started defining “EL competency” as a
160 single construct and argued that this competency is essential for entrepreneurial
161 development [13, 56-58]. Therefore, because entrepreneurial competency and leadership
162 competency have been found to link to entrepreneurial intentions, our third research
163 question asked whether the EL competency of RRR women have the potential to impact
164 entrepreneurial growth intentions. Our third hypothesis is, therefore:

165 *H3: The EL competency of RRR women entrepreneurs is positively related to their*
166 *venture growth intentions.*

167 This hypothesis is based on not only the Self-efficacy theory[34] , but also the
168 Self-determination theory [59], to postulate that when female founders intrinsic values,
169 interests and passion for their venture are served by growing their ventures, they are likely
170 to be motivated and pursue venture growth.

171 Furthermore, an enhanced understanding of whether the EL competency of RRR
172 women mediates the link between their EL identity and their venture growth intentions
173 can help to generate awareness and empower these women to advance their EL identity,
174 stimulate their will to grow their ventures and overcome the obstacles they face. Because
175 there is still a knowledge gap regarding EL competency's role in forming venture growth
176 intentions, we asked whether the EL competency of RRR women mediates the
177 relationship between their EL identity and venture growth intentions. Therefore, our final
178 hypothesis is:

179 *H4: Australian RRR women entrepreneurs' EL competency mediates the relationship*
180 *between EL identity and venture growth intentions.*

181 **Materials and methods**

182 **Data collection and sampling**

183 Data for this research were collected via an online survey of 99 women entrepreneurs in
184 rural, regional, and remote Queensland, Australia. This study is part of a larger funded
185 project, The WiRE (women in rural, regional and remote enterprises) Program, which
186 aims to assist women in RRR enterprises to start and grow their business. The population
187 we wish to make inferences about are, thus Australian RRR women entrepreneurs. There
188 are 452,000 small businesses in Queensland, Australia. Of these small businesses,
189 158,200 (35%) are owned or run by women. Our focus is to target the population of
190 women entrepreneurs residing in remote or regional Queensland, which accounts for 33
191 percent (52,206) of the small women-owned businesses in the region. Due to the lack of
192 an existing comprehensive database containing contact information for all women
193 entrepreneurs in the remote or regional areas of Queensland, it was not feasible to access
194 the entire population. Additionally, reliable information regarding the exact location and
195 numbers of this population was not available.

196 To address this challenge, we adopted a research methodology in line with the
197 work of Kille, Wiesner (60). Specifically, we employed typical case, purposive sampling,
198 which is a non-probability or non-representative sampling technique used when it is not
199 possible to obtain a representative sample. Our focus was on capturing the typicality of
200 study participants and contexts rather than achieving representativeness. While our
201 findings cannot be generalized to the entire population, they serve as an illustration based
202 on similar samples and enable comparisons with other relevant studies.

203 Initially, an email invitation to participate in the survey was sent to women
204 entrepreneurs subscribed to the only Queensland RRR women entrepreneurship capacity

205 building program, The WiRE Program. Then, an email was sent to several women
206 networks and associations actively operating in RRR Australia, requesting them to invite
207 members who are women entrepreneurs to participate in the survey. Potential respondents
208 were invited to click on a survey link to fill out the survey. One-hundred-and-nine survey
209 responses were received after multiple reminders. We excluded ten respondents owing to
210 missing data, with the remaining 99 usable surveys included in the analysis. The survey
211 was conducted from February to March 2022, and we assume the response rate would
212 have been higher if RRR Australia had not been trying to cope with the reverberations of
213 COVID and extreme flooding in RRR areas at the time of distributing the survey, which
214 significantly negatively impacted small businesses in these areas, in particular [61].

215 The survey questionnaire was pretested with 10 participants in the study area to
216 check the content validity and appropriateness of wording, formatting, and sequencing of
217 questions. The questions were refined based on the outcomes of the pilot. Feedback on
218 the questions and scales was also sought from a panel of four senior entrepreneurship and
219 leadership academics and three entrepreneurship development experts. The measurement
220 constructs measured in the survey included: Entrepreneurial leader identity (ELI), EL
221 competency (ELC) and Venture Growth intentions (GI). The construct ELI was measured
222 by four items adapted from [62]: “Developing and nurturing a venture/business is an
223 important part of who I am (EL1)”, “I think of myself as an entrepreneur (EL2)”, “I think
224 of myself as a leader (EL3)” and “When I describe myself, I would include the word
225 leader (EL4)”.

226 To assess Entrepreneurial Leadership Capability (ELC), we utilized Bagheri and
227 Harrison's (2020) EL Leadership Scale, which captures ELC from the perspective of
228 followers. We adapted this survey to enable respondents to reflect on their EL behavior.
229 The ELC is a higher-order reflective-reflective construct that measured seven lower-order

230 components, including: Framing Challenges (FC) (5 items); Absorbing Uncertainty (AU)
231 (4 Items); Underwriting (UW) (5 items); Building Commitment (BC) (5 items); Defining
232 Gravity (DG) (4 items); Opportunity Identification and Exploitation (OIE) (11 items);
233 and Orientation towards Learning (OTI) (5 items).

234 A single item, "My intention is to grow my venture as large as possible, "
235 measured respondents' growth intentions (GI). This scale was adapted from Edelman,
236 Brush (63).

237 Measurement items were measured by using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is
238 "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree". The reliability and validity of measurement
239 scales are discussed in measurement model section.

240 **Data analysis method**

241 To estimate the parameters of the mediation model, the partial least squares - structural
242 equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method was implemented using Smart PLS 3 software.
243 A PLS-SEM is a variance-based estimating method that examines the reliability and
244 validity of constructs and evaluates the relationships between the constructs [64]. As our
245 model consists of a higher-order construct ELC, we utilized the disjoint two-stage
246 approach to evaluate our model. In the first stage, we created a model connecting the
247 endogenous and exogenous constructs to the lower-order component of the
248 Entrepreneurial Leadership competency construct. We first evaluated the quality of the
249 measurement model for the lower-order components by assessing factor loadings,
250 reliability and validity. After confirming the quality of the measurement model, we
251 computed the latent variable score for the lower-order component of ELC. In the second
252 stage, we created indicators for the higher order of ELC, using the latent variable scores
253 obtained from the first stage, after which we created the second stage model. In this stage,

254 we first assessed the quality of the higher-order measurement model, and then proceeded
 255 to hypothesis testing. The study tested the proposed hypotheses by using a structural
 256 model. To examine the proposed relationships, the study tested the mediation model by
 257 applying Preacher and Hayes' approach by following the steps explained by F. Hair Jr,
 258 Sarstedt (65). First, we examined the direct effect between ELI and GI by applying the
 259 bootstrapping procedure with 5000 sub-samples. After confirming the presence of the
 260 direct effects, in the second step, we included ELC as a mediator in the model (Figure1).
 261 Then we examined the relationship between ELI, ELC and GI.

262 **Results**

263 **Measurement model**

264 **Lower order measurement model**

265 All the factor loadings for the lower-order constructs were greater than 0.5 (Table 1).
 266 Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were higher than 0.7 (Table 1), which
 267 fulfilled the recommended threshold value [66]. Convergent validity was acceptable
 268 because the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was over 0.5 (Table 1).
 269

Table 1. Loading, reliability, and validity statistics of lower-order components

Constructs/ indicators	Loadings	Composite reliability	Average Variance Extracted
AU		0.8	0.577
AU1	0.857		
AU2	0.814		
AU3	0.579		
BC		0.838	0.571
BC2	0.774		
BC3	0.526		
BC4	0.886		

DG		0.835	0.717
BC5	0.789		
DG2	0.853		
DG4	0.840		
FC		0.832	0.555
FC2	0.630		
FC3	0.712		
FC4	0.812		
FC5	0.810		
OIE		0.879	0.514
OIE1	0.648		
OIE10	0.635		
OIE2	0.800		
OIE3	0.845		
OIE4	0.699		
OIE5	0.747		
OIE8	0.610		
OTL		0.823	0.541
OTL2	0.626		
OTL3	0.700		
OTL4	0.718		
OTL5	0.875		
UW		0.831	0.556
UW1	0.703		
UW2	0.866		
UW4	0.798		
UW5	0.586		
ELI		0.926	0.759
Tidt1	0.839		
Tidt2	0.879		
Tidt3	0.903		
Tidt4	0.862		
NTint4	1.000	1.000	1.000

270

271 Discriminant validity was confirmed by the Heterotriat-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) of
 272 correlation with values below 0.9 (Table 2) which satisfied the recommended threshold
 273 [67]. These values of internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity
 274 ascertained the quality of lower order constructs.

275

276

Table 2. Discriminant validity assessment of lower order construct using the HTMT criterion

Constructs	AU	BC	DG	FC	GI	ELI	OIE	OTL	UW
AU									
BC	0.742								
DG	0.778	0.773							
FC	0.709	0.715	0.379						
GI	0.505	0.323	0.38	0.466					
ELI	0.473	0.334	0.456	0.312	0.679				
OIE	0.897	0.688	0.803	0.65	0.611	0.589			
OTL	0.472	0.703	0.511	0.487	0.289	0.378	0.6		
UW	0.808	0.815	0.47	0.845	0.374	0.457	0.667	0.653	

278 **Higher order measurement model**

279 All the factor loadings for the higher order construct were greater than 0.5 (Table 3).

280 The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) scores of the ELC construct were

281 higher than 0.7 (Table 3), which fulfil the recommended threshold value [66]. The

282 convergent validity of the higher-order construct was acceptable because the Average

283 Variance Extracted (AVE) was over 0.500 (Table 3).

Table 3. Loading, reliability, and validity statistics of higher-order components of EL competency

	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Composite reliability</i>	<i>Average Variance Extracted</i>
ELC		0.871	0.900	0.565
AU	0.776			
BC	0.778			
DG	0.654			
FC	0.701			
OIE	0.840			
OTL	0.708			
UW	0.787			

284

285 The Heterotriat-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations with values below 0.9
 286 (Table 4) ascertained discriminant validity for the higher-order construct ELC. These
 287 values of the internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity
 288 ascertained that the quality of the higher order construct was sufficient.

Table 4. Discriminant validity assessment of higher order construct using the HTMT criterion

	ELC	GI	ELI
ELC			
GI	0.538		
ELI	0.551	0.679	

289 **Structural model**

290 The results revealed that the direct effect between the constructs was positive and
 291 significant ($\beta= 0.643$, $P<0.001$; Table 5). The results support our first hypothesis that the
 292 EL identity of RRR women entrepreneurs has a positive effect on their venture growth
 293 intentions.

Table 5. Direct and indirect effect of ELI on GI

	β	<i>T Statistics</i>	<i>P Values</i>
<u>Direct effect</u>			
ELI -> GI	0.643	7.637	0.000
<u>Indirect effect</u>			
ELI -> ELC -> GI	0.132	2.475	0.013

294
 295 The results also support our second hypothesis that the EL identity of RRR
 296 women has a significant positive effect on their EL competency ($\beta=0.505$, $P<0.001$; Table
 297 6). Similarly, our third hypothesis was confirmed that the EL competency of RRR women
 298 entrepreneurs is significantly positively related to their venture growth intentions

299 ($\beta=0.261$, $P=0.008$; Table 6). Moreover, the results revealed that the effect of the indirect
 300 path ELI to ELC to GI was positive and significant ($\beta= 0.132$, $P= 0.013$; Table 5). The
 301 results support our fourth hypothesis that the ELC mediates the relationship between ELI
 302 and GI. However, the mediating effect of ELC did not fully suppress the direct
 303 relationship between EL and GI, as the path from ELI to GI was significant and positive
 304 ($\beta= 0.512$, $P<0.001$; Table 6) on the presence of the mediating variable ELC. Hence, the
 305 mediating effect of ELC is partial.

306

307

Table 6. Path coefficients of the structural model of the interplay between EL identity, EL competency, and growth intentions of women in rural Australia

Path	β	<i>T</i>	<i>p-value</i>
ELC -> GI	0.261	2.64	0.008
ELI -> ELC	0.505	8.74	0.000
ELI -> GI	0.512	4.546	0.000

308

309

310

311 An evaluation of the explanatory power of the structural model (Figure 1) was
 312 made using the *R*² value, the explained variance of the dependent constructs [68]. The *R*²
 313 values for both ELC (0.255) and GI (0.465) were higher than the minimum threshold of
 314 0.10 [69].

Fig1. Structural model of the interplay between EL identity, EL competency, and growth Intentions of women in rural Australia

317

318 Last but not least, *Stone-Q2 Geisser's* was used to assess the predictive value of
319 the model [68]. All *Q2* values in the results were found to be greater than zero (see Table
320 7), indicating that the models have predictive value.
321

Table 7. Explanatory power and predictive value of the model

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>R2</i>	<i>Q2</i>
ELC	0.255	0.133
GI	0.465	0.409

322

323 Discussion

324 This study examined the interplay between EL competency, EL identity and growth
325 intentions of RRR Australian women using a Partial least square structural equation
326 model. Our findings supported our first hypothesis that RRR women entrepreneurs with
327 a strong EL identity have a higher intention to grow their businesses. The present finding
328 supports the conclusion reached by Rise, Sheeran (70) in a meta-analysis, suggesting that
329 self-identity accounts for a significant portion of the additional variance in intentions.
330 This result aligns with previous studies that have also identified self-identity as a predictor
331 of behavioral intentions, as demonstrated in studies by Paquin and Keating (37), Carfora,
332 Caso (38), and Obschonka, Silbereisen (39). The results also support the growing
333 evidence that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model ought to incorporate identity
334 to more accurately predict individuals' intentions [e.g. 71, 72, 73]. The TPB predicts an
335 individual's intentions to engage in a behavior at a specific time and place[74].

336 Our results also demonstrate that RRR women's entrepreneurial leadership (EL)
337 identity is significantly positively related to EL competency, supporting our second

338 hypothesis that the EL identity of RRR women positively affects their EL competency.
339 This finding corresponds with the results of [42], who found that the identity of a leader
340 correlates with their leadership competency. Furthermore, our study establishes a positive
341 association between EL competency and growth intentions, supporting our third
342 hypothesis that the EL competency of RRR women entrepreneurs is linked to their
343 venture growth intentions. These findings are in line with prior research conducted by
344 Fuller, Liu (47) and Chang, Shu (48). Our finding is important for developing EL
345 competency of Australian RRR women as Lord and Hall (40) reported that self-identity
346 not only influences the development of leadership competency, but also inspires a person
347 to build leadership competency [41]. As mentioned earlier, addressing the development
348 of the EL identity of Australian RRR women in current and future RRR entrepreneurship
349 capacity-building programs is essential to enhance their EL competency.

350 Our findings support the notion that EL identity plays a role in learning EL
351 competency as identity plays a significant role in influencing, molding, and choosing
352 behavior [31, 32]. Competencies gained through learning experiences are reflected in
353 their actions as entrepreneurs adapt their behavior in response to new information. Our
354 findings indicate that EL identity, EL competency and growth intentions are related and
355 that EL competency partially mediates the relationship between EL identity and venture
356 growth intentions, in line with our fourth hypothesis that Australian RRR women
357 entrepreneurs' EL competency mediates the relationship between EL identity and venture
358 growth intentions. Our mediation analysis found EL identity as a significant contributor
359 to women entrepreneurs' growth intentions owing to its direct and indirect relationship
360 with the construct. One could therefore argue that in future research, EL identity ought
361 to be included in models that examine the venture growth phenomenon. The relationships

362 between all the measurement constructs in this study have not been explored previously;
363 therefore, our study contributes to the EL literature by addressing a theoretical gap.

364 From a practical perspective, our study strengthens the case made by Birdthistle,
365 Eversole (29), that clear attention needs to be paid to gendered dynamics in rural
366 entrepreneurial ecosystems and for these ecosystems to be inclusive of women's gendered
367 experiences [75]. The constructs in this study were examined from participants' own
368 perspectives, allowing us to gain a close-up look at the self-perceptions of women
369 entrepreneurs on the margins, concerning EL identity, EL competency and venture
370 growth intentions. By doing so, we hope our findings contribute to creating a more
371 inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem for RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

372 **Practical Implications and Conclusions**

373 Our findings underpin the following practical implications:

374 Firstly, designing and implementing EL leadership development programs with a focus
375 on enhancing entrepreneurial leadership skills and EL identity tailored specifically for
376 RRR women entrepreneurs, could potentially enhance their intentions to grow their
377 businesses.

378 Secondly, encouraging mentoring relationships and role models who exemplify
379 successful entrepreneurial leadership can inspire and guide RRR women entrepreneurs,
380 helping them build their EL identity and fostering higher intentions for business growth.

381 Thirdly, the encouragement and creation of networking platforms and
382 communities where RRR women entrepreneurs foster connections and collaborations
383 with like-minded individuals, industry experts, and potential partners could enhance their
384 EL identity and intentions to grow their businesses.

385 Fourthly, policymakers can play an important role by implementing supportive
386 policies and regulations that address the unique needs and challenges of RRR women
387 entrepreneurs, including creating favorable business environments, providing incentives
388 for entrepreneurship in remote or regional areas, and promoting gender equality in RRR
389 entrepreneurship.

390 Finally, encouraging further research and knowledge sharing in the field of RRR
391 women entrepreneurship can contribute to the development of evidence-based practices
392 and policies. Continued examination of the factors that influence EL identity and
393 intentions to grow businesses among RRR women entrepreneurs can inform targeted
394 tailored interventions and support strategies.

395 In conclusion, this is a timely study in view of the lack of female EL role models
396 in rural areas and women entrepreneurs questioning their confidence and abilities to grow
397 their businesses. Our study answered the call to not only contribute to research on the
398 gender gap in entrepreneurship but to be grounded in a gendered perspective that is
399 constructed on a ‘female norm’ rather than how women entrepreneurship diverges from
400 the male norm benchmark [76]. Our research demonstrates that theoretical attention
401 ought to be paid to tease out further the link between the EL identity, EL competency and
402 venture growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, the results have
403 shown that there is a clear case for policy development that advances RRR women
404 entrepreneurs through strategies and pathways that develop the EL identity and EL
405 competency of RRR women entrepreneurs to strengthen their confidence, skills and
406 appetite to grow their ventures.

407 **Recommendations**

408 A limitation of this study is that even though the assumptions we tested in our research

409 were theoretically derived, causation could not be demonstrated due to the study's cross-
410 sectional design. We, therefore, recommend that future longitudinal and experimental
411 studies examine the relationships between the three constructs further.

412 Furthermore, our study revealed that the EL competency of RRR women
413 entrepreneurs only partially mediate the relationship between EL identity and
414 entrepreneurial growth intentions. These findings indicate that other paths could be from
415 EL identity to entrepreneurial growth intentions. We recommend that future research
416 include other constructs to explore possible paths.

417 The conclusions of our study are based on a specific demographic from RRR
418 settings in Australia, which may differ from other situations. Consequently, future
419 research should examine the measurement constructs in other settings.

420 Despite these limitations, the findings of this study deepen our understanding of
421 a new area of research in the RRR context and that there is much more to explore about
422 the role that EL identity and EL competency play in the venture growth intentions of RRR
423 women entrepreneurs.

424

425

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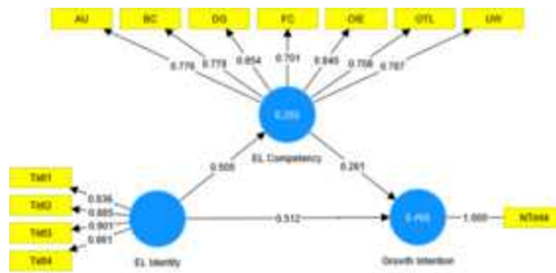
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- 646

Figure

[Click here to access/download;Figure;Fig 1.tif](#)



Data



4.2 Summary

In summary, Chapter 4 presented the empirical findings from the second research study, providing valuable insights into the interplay between EL identity, EL competency and venture growth intentions among women in rural Australia. Through rigorous data analysis, the chapter confirmed the proposed hypotheses and revealed a significant and positive relationship between EL identity, EL competency and growth intentions. In addition, the findings highlight the mediating role of EL in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. These findings hold practical implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers, deepening the understanding of EL dynamics and offering guidance for fostering venture growth. Moving forward to Chapter 5, the focus shifts towards the integration of EL identity, EL, and the TPB to further explore the determinants of venture growth intentions. This integration allows for a comprehensive examination of the factors that influence entrepreneurial growth intentions thus contributing to the existing body of literature on EL. Chapter 4 served as a pivotal link between theory and practice, providing valuable insights into the complexities of EL and paving the way for continued exploration in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 5: PAPER 3 – INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP INTO THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR TO PREDICT VENTURE GROWTH INTENTIONS OF AUSTRALIAN RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 builds upon the solid foundation established in Chapter 1, in which the research objectives and methodology were outlined, and Chapter 2, which provided an extensive literature review and theoretical framework. By integrating the empirical findings from the prior studies presented in Chapters 3 and 4, this chapter presents a new research study titled ‘Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs. The aim of this study, which was submitted to the *Journal of Rural Studies*, was to delve deeper into the intricate relationships among EL identity, EL and venture growth intentions. Through a comprehensive analysis of these relationships, the study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of entrepreneurship in rural contexts and introduces a novel model for predicting venture growth intentions. The chapter begins by introducing the objectives of the research study and providing an overview of the research methodology employed. Then, it proceeds to present and analyse the empirical findings, focusing on the interplay between EL identity, EL and predictors of the TPB, including attitude, subjective norms, perceived behaviour control and venture growth intentions. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflective analysis of the implications of these findings, highlighting their significance for academic researchers and practical applications in the field of entrepreneurship. Overall, this chapter makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the complex factors that influence the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in rural Australia. By addressing the gap between theory and practice, it provides actionable insights that can support and empower entrepreneurial endeavours in these contexts, further advancing the field of entrepreneurship research.

Journal of Rural Studies

Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behavior to predict venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs.

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Abstract:	This study addresses the understudied area of cultivating business growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural, regional, and remote (RRR) areas, considering their unique challenges. It explores the role of entrepreneurial leader identity and entrepreneurial leadership in the context of Australian rural women entrepreneurship, which has received limited attention in research. The lack of research on growth intentions in RRR areas creates a theoretical gap, hindering the development of a comprehensive framework to understand entrepreneurship dynamics in these regions. The study incorporates entrepreneurial leadership factors alongside the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs in Queensland, Australia. The findings reveal a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and growth intentions, with entrepreneurial leadership and other factors mediating this relationship. These insights have practical implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers, offering guidance to foster venture growth in rural and remote regions.
Suggested Reviewers:	<p>Jordan McSweeney Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, Suffolk University jjmcsweeney@suffolk.edu Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, Jordan McSweeney, has contributed to the field of entrepreneurship with publications focused on entrepreneurial intentions.</p> <p>Saleema Kauser Senior Lecturer, The University of Manchester saleema.kauser@manchester.ac.uk Saleema Kauser has made notable academic contributions in the realm of women entrepreneurs, particularly in understanding the identity of entrepreneurial leaders.</p> <p>Nikolai Mouraviev Abertay University n.mouraviev@abertay.ac.uk Nikolai Mouraviev has cultivated extensive expertise in the realm of women entrepreneurial leadership.</p> <p>Hayfaa A. Tlaiss Associate professor, Alfaisal University College of Business hayfaatlaiss@hotmail.com Hayfaa A. Tlaiss has made significant academic contributions to the study of the entrepreneurial leadership and identity among women entrepreneurs.</p>

Cover Letter

Dear Editor,

I am delighted to present our manuscript titled "Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behavior to predict venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs" for your esteemed consideration in the Journal of Rural Studies.

This study bridges a critical gap in the realm of entrepreneurship by focusing on the cultivation of business growth intentions within the demographic of women entrepreneurs in rural, regional, and remote areas. Our research delves into the distinct challenges faced by these entrepreneurs, exploring the pivotal roles played by entrepreneurial leader identity and entrepreneurial leadership within the context of Australian rural women entrepreneurship—a topic that has received insufficient scholarly attention.

The scarcity of research concerning growth intentions in rural, regional, and remote areas has left a significant theoretical void, hampering the development of a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of entrepreneurship within these regions. This study seeks to fill this void by amalgamating entrepreneurial leadership factors with the Theory of Planned Behavior. Our investigation centers on the examination of venture growth intentions among rural, regional, and remote women entrepreneurs in Queensland, Australia. The findings underscore a positive correlation between entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and growth intentions, with entrepreneurial leadership and other associated factors mediating this intricate relationship.

The implications of our findings hold practical significance for both entrepreneurs and policymakers, furnishing valuable insights for nurturing venture growth within rural and remote regions.

This submission represents original, unpublished work and has not been previously submitted for review to any other journal. We affirm that neither the manuscript nor any segment thereof is currently under consideration or has been published elsewhere. All authors have diligently reviewed and approved the content of this manuscript, concurring with its submission to the Journal of Rural Studies.

We extend our sincere gratitude for considering our research paper for potential publication. We eagerly anticipate a favorable response from your esteemed editorial team.

Yours sincerely,

Purushottam Dhakal

Highlights

- The study integrated the concepts of entrepreneurial leadership identity and entrepreneurial leadership into the Theory of Planned Behavior, presenting an exploratory model to comprehend venture growth intentions.
- Findings from a partial least squares structural equation model indicated a significant relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and entrepreneurial leadership, along with three predictors from the theory of planned behavior.
- Entrepreneurial leadership, along with attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, acts as mediators in the connection between entrepreneurial leadership identity and growth intentions.
- By introducing an integrated model, this study addresses a theoretical gap in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial leadership, offering practical insights to enhance the design of rural and regional entrepreneurial development programs.

Integrating entrepreneurial leadership into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of Australian Rural Women Entrepreneurs.

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Abstract

This study addresses the understudied area of cultivating business growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural, regional, and remote (RRR) areas, considering their unique challenges. It explores the role of entrepreneurial leader identity and entrepreneurial leadership in the context of Australian rural women entrepreneurship, which has received limited attention in research. The lack of research on growth intentions in RRR areas creates a theoretical gap, hindering the development of a comprehensive framework to understand entrepreneurship dynamics in these regions. The study incorporates entrepreneurial leadership factors alongside the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs in Queensland, Australia. The findings reveal a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and growth intentions, with entrepreneurial leadership and other factors mediating this relationship. These insights have practical implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers, offering guidance to foster venture growth in rural and remote regions.

Keywords: women entrepreneurs; growth intentions; entrepreneurial leadership; rural entrepreneurship; venture growth; theory of planned behavior

1. Introduction

Women entrepreneurship is essential for economic growth, job creation and community development (Foss et al., 2019). In addition to its importance to the economy, generation of jobs, and community prosperity, women entrepreneurship can potentially improve the lives of women and the world at large (Foss et al., 2019). In the best interest of societal progress,

promoting and supporting women entrepreneurship is essential (Sharma et al., 2012). Business growth is a particular area in which women entrepreneurs. Especially rural women entrepreneurs, ought to be encouraged and supported. Business growth can encourage women to continue and remain in their business as women entrepreneurs are more vulnerable to close their business compared to their male counterparts. Previous research has demonstrated that women face more challenges than male during their entrepreneurial journeys (Brush et al., 2019). Moreover, challenges like access to capital, networks, and other resources are more exacerbated for women entrepreneurs in rural areas (Wiesner, 2018). Enhancing the entrepreneurial leadership competencies of rural women entrepreneur can help to overcome these challenges and help to foster their business grow. Entrepreneurial leaders in rural areas play a vital and transformative role in addressing the specific challenges faced by rural businesses. These leaders can identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and inspire collective efforts towards shared goals (Renko et al., 2015, Gupta et al., 2004, Kuratko, 2007, Bagheri, 2017). With their visionary outlook, they can envision a future beyond the present (Gupta et al., 2004) and, consequently, offer valuable assistance in securing access to limited resources like capital and networks in rural settings (Poon et al., 2012). Moreover, they actively contribute to nurturing the local business ecosystem by forming strategic partnerships and collaborations with other groups and mentoring and supporting fellow entrepreneurs (Neumeier et al., 2019). In this way, entrepreneurial leaders serve as catalysts for positive change, driving rural businesses towards growth and success. Additionally, studies have found that entrepreneurial leadership behavior is a crucial factor in determining the success of a venture (Bagheri, 2017). Therefore, entrepreneurial leadership is critical for fostering economic development, especially in rural areas (Harrison et al., 2016). Despite the significance of entrepreneurial leadership can play in economic development, there remains a

scarcity of research investigating its specific role in the phenomenon of venture growth, especially in the context of rural women entrepreneurship.

Researchers have highlighted the significant impact of an individual's identity on their behavior, underscoring the importance of developing a leadership identity as a fundamental aspect of becoming an effective business leader (Markus et al., 1990, Kwok et al., 2018). Self-identity has been demonstrated to be a strong predictor of a person's intentions and actions, regardless of their past behaviors (Paquin and Keating, 2017, Carfora et al., 2017, Obschonka et al., 2015).

Extending this argument to women entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial identity is particularly crucial for rural women entrepreneurs, as it equips them to overcome their unique challenges and thrive in a competitive environment (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2019). An entrepreneurial leadership identity is a distinct set of characteristics that defines an entrepreneurial leader, encompassing their self-concept as both a leader and entrepreneur and their understanding of their role and responsibilities in driving a successful business (Dhakal et al., 2022). By fostering an entrepreneurial leadership identity, these women can build the confidence and resilience necessary to advocate for themselves and their businesses, while also seizing and capitalizing on opportunities (Dean and Ford, 2017). In doing so, rural women entrepreneurs can carve their path to success and overcome the hurdles they encounter, ultimately empowering themselves to flourish in the business world.

Venture growth intention plays a critical role in the venture growth phenomenon. Researchers have demonstrated that venture growth intention predicts venture growth (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003, Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2017). Some researchers in entrepreneurship have argued that the desire to grow one's business is an inherent characteristic of entrepreneurs (Georgellis et al., 2000). However, a substantial body of literature challenges this viewpoint

and argues that not all entrepreneurs who start a business intend to grow it. This is particularly evident in the case of female entrepreneurs, as studies have shown that some women entrepreneurs deliberately chose not to grow their businesses (Cliff, 1998, Coleman, 2016). Several reasons for this have been cited, but one could be a lack of entrepreneurial identity, as research shows that a robust entrepreneurial leadership identity has a positive relationship with venture growth intention (Dhakal et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial leadership identity can also impact entrepreneurial leadership development, especially when women entrepreneurs perceive they have less entrepreneurial leadership competencies and are less confident that they can grow their business, which could affect their intentions to grow business. In this context, it is essential to understand the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs.

In the context of venture growth intention, researchers utilized the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) to understand the factors that influence an entrepreneur's decision to grow their business. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological theory that explains the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions. According to the TPB, an individual's intention to perform a behavior is influenced by their attitudes toward the behavior, the perceived social pressure to perform the behavior, and the individual's perceived control over the behavior. The framework of TPB is the most utilized concept in studying human behavior, and it has significant influence in the research community (Ajzen, 2002, Armitage and Conner, 2001). TPB is also applied to study entrepreneurial behavior in multiple ways. For example, Kautonen et al. (2015) examined how the TPB's constructs' explained the evolution of business start-up behavior. Furthermore, a systematic review by Lortie and Castogiovanni (2015) found that TPB has been used in entrepreneurial research to explain and predict numerous entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors. The systematic review reveals entrepreneurial researchers have an interest on venture creation intentions, venture creation behaviors, venture development intentions, and

venture development behaviors; however, the study found that venture development intention that includes venture growth intention has been understudied.

Even though The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is widely used and well-established, it has limitations. One limitation is that the TPB typically explains moderate variance in an individual's behavior, leaving some unexplained variance. This means that other factors influence behavior that the TPB does not capture. Previous studies on entrepreneurship reveal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral controls together only explain 30–45% of the variation in intentions (Kolvereid, 1996, Liñán and Chen, 2009, Van Gelderen et al., 2008). Researchers have attempted many additions and modifications of the TPB to predict intentions (Lortie and Castogiovanni, 2015).

Furthermore, Lortie and Castogiovanni (2015) found the scarcity of research on additional antecedents combined with the TBP to find the venture development process. In addition, Lortie and Castogiovanni (2015) recommended exploring the connection between strategy-making and intention. It is clear that entrepreneurial behavior is planned behavior. The authors argue that there need to be more than three antecedents of TBP to explain the variation of entrepreneurial intention fully. Keeping in mind the need to link strategy-making and intention, our research incorporates entrepreneurial leadership along with TPB antecedents to explain venture growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs.

Despite its importance, there is a dearth of research on the role that entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurial leadership can play in the business growth phenomenon within the context of women entrepreneurship. This is particularly true for Australian rural women entrepreneurs, where the unique challenges and opportunities that they face have yet to be fully explored. Therefore, we argue that entrepreneurial leadership identity and entrepreneurial leadership

ought to be included in the TPB as a model that explores venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in rural Australia.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

2.1 Entrepreneurial leadership Identity

Identity is a term that refers to an individual's perception of themselves, which underlies their interpretation of events, intentions, motivations, and actions (Kaplan and Flum, 2009). It comprises self-perceptions, group memberships, beliefs, values, objectives, emotions, and habitual actions, all contributing to motivation (Kaplan and Flum, 2012, Eccles, 2009, Oyserman, 2015a). Identity, as defined by cognitive social psychologists, is a collection of cognitive self-schemas that are crucial because they influence subsequent thoughts and actions (Markus, 1977, Cross and Markus, 1994). The self combines personality, cognition, and social factors that guide behavior and worldview (Cross and Markus, 1994, Gardner et al., 1999). Individuals gain knowledge of their identities by observing themselves and receiving feedback from others, and their sense of self and expectations are linked to their leadership roles and how they perceive them (Oyserman, 2015b). In contemporary literature on self-perception, an increasing number of scholarly inquiries have employed identity theory to elucidate the processes that lead to the formation of entrepreneurial intentions (Murnieks et al., 2020, Wry and York, 2015). Specifically, the construct of self-identity as an entrepreneur has been posited as a significant predictor of such intentions, with empirical investigations primarily demonstrating a direct and positive effect (Smith and Woodworth, 2012).

In the realm of leadership research, it is widely acknowledged that cognitive interpretations of leadership experiences significantly impact the development of an individual's self-identity as a leader (Kragt and Guenter, 2018, Miscenko et al., 2017). Specifically, if one's self-image aligns with one's self-perception as a leader or can display the competencies of a prototypical leader, one would be more likely to identify as a leader (DeRue and Ashford, 2010, Kragt and

Day, 2020). Moreover, one's ability to identify as a leader can be further enhanced by exposure to other leaders with whom one can identify. As per Lord and Hall's (1995) cognitive theory of leadership, leader identity functions as a cognitive schema that stores information and knowledge associated with leadership roles, guiding individuals' behavior and interactions in such settings. Based on this perspective, it is contended that Entrepreneurial Leader Identity plays a vital role in shaping the entrepreneurial leader's behavior, including their decision-making and growth processes.

The term "entrepreneurial leader identity" pertains to an individual's perception of themselves as an entrepreneurial leader. An entrepreneurial leader is a person who identifies opportunities for their business, assembles and motivates a team to achieve the entrepreneurial goal, and has the vision to achieve success (Gupta et al., 2004). Developing an entrepreneurial leader identity requires internalizing both the entrepreneurial and leadership aspects of the identity (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Additionally, incorporating the entrepreneurial leader identity into one's existing identity can be crucial to establishing an authentic and enduring entrepreneurial leader identity (Morgan et al., 2013). In summary, entrepreneurial leader identity is an individual's self-conception that incorporates entrepreneurial and leadership aspects and is essential for becoming a successful entrepreneurial leader.

Entrepreneurial leader identity guides the entrepreneurial process and behavior, including venture growth. Leadership experiences influence a leader's self-identity, particularly if they can display the competencies of a prototypical leader (Kragt and Day, 2020).

The impact of an entrepreneur's identity on the growth decisions of established ventures has been a subject of interest for scholars. Shepherd and Haynie (2009) have shown that this link exists, and it has been further substantiated by recent findings from Dhakal et al. (2022). Specifically, the authors have revealed a positive association between entrepreneurial leader

identity and venture growth intentions. From this perspective, one can argue that the entrepreneurial leader identity of RRR women may also exert an important influence on their intention to expand their ventures.

H1: The entrepreneurial leader identity of Australian RRR women positively affects their venture growth intentions.

2.2 Entrepreneurial leader identity, attitude and venture growth intentions

Given the socio-cognitive view of attitude and its relationship to identity, it could be argued that attitude and identity are closely related, as both are socially situated and influenced by the environment. Some researchers support this view (Atkinson, 2010, Billig, 1991, Clark and Chalmers, 1998, Harré and Gillett, 1994) and argue that attitude is social and context-dependent rather than purely confined to the mind. Atkinson (2010) and Atkinson and Clark and Chalmers (1998) use the concept of "extended cognition" to describe how cognition is not solely contained within the brain but also involves external environmental factors. Besides, the three-component attitude model proposed by Hogg and Vaughan (2011) further emphasizes the social dimension of attitude, as it involves conation or the mental decision to perform an action in response to affect or cognition towards something or somebody. Attitudes are not only cognitive responses but are primarily influenced by context, according to Clark and Chalmers (1998). Furthermore, expressing attitudes towards a topic or person is not only an aspect of identity but also an act of identity through which people communicate their feelings of self to their surrounding social contexts. Identity theory is therefore linked to individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and actions in ways that attitude theory neglects (Stets and Biga, 2003).

Understanding the socio-cognitive view of attitude and its relationship to identity can provide valuable insights into the factors influencing entrepreneurial venture growth. The socio-cognitive view of attitude and its relationship to identity can also be linked to entrepreneurial venture growth. Entrepreneurs' attitudes toward their ventures are influenced by various

contextual factors such as the social, cultural, and economic environment (Guerrero et al., 2021). For example, their social identity and cultural norms can influence entrepreneurs' attitudes towards risk-taking and innovation (Jones et al., 2019). Moreover, expressing attitudes towards one's venture can also be viewed as an act of identity through which entrepreneurs communicate their values, beliefs, and aspirations to others (O'Neil et al., 2022). This can affect how stakeholders perceive and respond to the venture, ultimately impacting its growth and success. Furthermore, the three-component model of attitude (Hogg and Vaughan, 2011) highlights the importance of conation or the mental decision to perform an action in response to affect or cognition towards something. This can be applied to rural women entrepreneurs' decision-making processes as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of growing their ventures. Their attitudes and beliefs towards their venture can influence their decisions on various factors such as resource allocation, marketing strategies, and product development (Karlsson and Honig, 2009, Krueger et al., 2000).

Entrepreneurial leader identity is the identity that incorporates identity as an entrepreneur as well as a leader and is shaped by various contextual factors, such as social norms, cultural values, and personal experiences (Dhakal et al., 2022). This identity influences their attitudes towards their venture and their growth intentions. Attitudes are mental states that reflect an individual's evaluation of a person, object, or idea. In the context of entrepreneurship, attitudes towards one's venture can influence decision-making processes and growth intentions (Cliff, 1998, Venugopal, 2016). Entrepreneurs' growth intentions are the extent to which they aim to expand and grow their ventures. Their attitudes towards their venture influence these intentions.

Based on the socio-cognitive view of attitude and its relationship to identity, it can be hypothesized that attitudes mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and venture growth intentions. Based on this theoretical framework, it can be hypothesized that

attitudes mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and venture growth intentions.

H2: The attitudes of rural women entrepreneurs towards their venture mediate the relationship between their entrepreneurial leader identity and their venture growth intentions.

H2a: The entrepreneurial leader identity of rural women entrepreneurs has a positive effect on attitudes.

H2b: The attitudes of rural women entrepreneurs positively affect venture growth intentions.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Leader Identity, Subjective Norms and Venture Growth Intentions

According to the social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 1971, Turner, 1975) identity and subjective norms are linked. This view is supported by Bagozzi and Lee (2002), who argued subjective norms are a function of social identity. The central idea of social identity theory is that people tend to identify themselves with specific social groups and adopt the norms and behaviors associated with those groups. Depersonalization is the cognitive process underlying this phenomenon, whereby individuals view themselves as embodiments of the in-group prototype rather than as unique individuals (Brewer et al., 1993, Hogg, 2004). This prototype is a mental representation of the social category that embodies the meanings and norms associated with it. The activation of social identity is enough to trigger depersonalization, where individuals conform to the norms of their group (Hogg and Hains, 1996). Therefore, when people think about who is important to them and their particular behavior, the social identity of that particular behavior will be triggered, and the cognitive process of depersonalization phenomenon is likely to occur. According to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) subjective norms refers to people's perception of the extent to which others who are important to them think that they should perform the behavior. Therefore, identity has an effect on the subjective norms of entrepreneurs' perception of the extent to which others who are important

to them. Whether they think they should perform the behavior will be guided by their social identity.

The norms of significant group members, particularly those who are more prototypical to the group, and believe that these prototypical members are important to them (Fisher et al., 2017). When their cognition is strongly derived from the prototype of entrepreneurial leadership identity, their perception of norms becomes stronger. Therefore, we propose that entrepreneurial leader identity positively affects subjective norms. Additionally, based on the theory of planned behavior, we can expect that subjective norms have a positive effect on venture growth intention. Thus, we hypothesize that subjective norms of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions. Specifically, we expect that the entrepreneurial leadership identity of women entrepreneurs of RRR Australia positively affects their subjective norms, and that the subjective norms of women entrepreneurs of RRR Australia positively affect their venture growth intentions.

H3: The subjective norms of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions.

H3a: The entrepreneurial leadership identity of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs positively affect their subjective norms.

H3b: The subjective norms of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs have positively affect their venture growth intentions.

2.4 Entrepreneurial leader identity, Perceived behavioral control and venture growth intentions

Perceived behavioral control is one of the predictors of behavioral intentions in the framework of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to the social identity theory, a relationship exists between identity and perceived behavioral control. As individuals engage in the process of self-categorization and group membership, researchers have observed the development of a social identity that serves as a cognitive schema encompassing the norms, values, and beliefs that regulate their group-related behavior (Korte, 2007, Shore and Chung, 2021). Researchers have noted that an individual's perception of their ability to regulate their behavior can be influenced by social factors such as social support and available resources (Schmutzler et al., 2019). When an individual perceives that they have sufficient social support and resources to achieve a specific behavior, their perception of their ability to control their behavior will likely increase (Brändle et al., 2018). This argument is also supported by the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), which is akin to perceived behavioral control. Both concepts refer to an individual's belief in their ability to execute a specific behavior successfully, despite having different definitions. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is strengthened when individuals have had a personal experience of success in performing a behavior, have seen similar others succeed in the same behavior, have been encouraged to believe in their capabilities, and have experienced positive emotions associated with the behavior. Bandura (1977) identified verbal persuasion as one of the factors that can contribute to a boost in self-efficacy. When individuals receive positive feedback or encouragement from others, it can increase their self-efficacy beliefs and motivate them to continue pursuing the behavior. According to social identity theory, people often compare themselves to others who are similar to them in some way, such as belonging to the same group or having similar abilities. When individuals compare themselves to others who are successful in a particular domain, it can increase their perceived self-efficacy in that domain (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994, Brändle et

al., 2018, Bandura, 1982). Identity formation can affect both self-efficacy and perceived behavioral control, as individuals may adopt certain identities or roles based on the expectations of others (Brändle et al., 2018). It can therefore be argued that if an individual perceives that they have social support and resources to achieve a particular behavior, their perceived behavioral control may increase. According to social identity theory, someone's identity is embedded in group-related norms and expectations, and if an individual believes that their social group expects or encourages them to perform a particular behavior, they may feel more in control of their behavior and be more likely to carry it out. Therefore, it could be argued that when RRR Australian women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial leadership identity positively impacts their venture growth intentions, then their perceived behavioral control will further affect their intentions to grow their businesses.

H4: The perceived behavioral control of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions.

H4a: The entrepreneurial leadership identity of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs positively effects their perceived behavioral control.

H4b: The perceived behavioral control of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs positively effects their venture growth intentions.

2.5 Entrepreneurial leadership Identity, Entrepreneurial leadership and venture growth intentions

The social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001) posits that leadership arises from social categorization and depersonalization processes linked to social identity. In this theory, leaders may emerge, maintain their position, and be effective due to fundamental social cognitive processes that cause individuals to perceive themselves in terms of the defining characteristics of a common and distinctive ingroup. Self-categorization or identification with the ingroup prototype is a means of achieving this. Additionally, individuals assimilate themselves to these

features through cognitive and behavioral depersonalization, resulting in ingroup stereotypic or normative perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors (Hogg, 2004, Brewer et al., 1993). Building on this theory, it could be argued that entrepreneurial leadership also arises from social categorization and depersonalization processes linked to entrepreneurial leadership identity. Consequently, entrepreneurial leadership can influence venture growth motivation, that is reflected in venture growth intentions (Koryak et al., 2015). The ability and competencies of an entrepreneurial leader to identify and leverage entrepreneurial opportunities is reflected in their entrepreneurial leadership (Bagheri and Harrison, 2020). Thus, when entrepreneurial leaders believe they possess the capability to identify and leverage entrepreneurial opportunities, they are more likely to envision their venture's growth, leading to a positive impact on their intentions to expand their business. Thus, we hypothesized:

H5: The self-perceived entrepreneurial leadership of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions.

H5a: The entrepreneurial leadership identity of RRR Australian women entrepreneurs positively affect their Perceived entrepreneurial leadership.

H5b: The self-perceived entrepreneurial leadership of women entrepreneur of RRR Australia positively affect their venture growth intentions.

3. Methods

3.1 Data Collection, Sampling and Measures

Data for this study were collected via an online survey among female entrepreneurs of rural, regional, and remote Queensland. Due to the lack of a comprehensive database, a typical case purposive sampling method was used. Respondents were recruited in two phases through non-probability snowball sampling. Initially, an online survey was sent to female entrepreneurs of The WiRE Program, which is an Australian entrepreneurship capacity building program that

helps and enables rural, regional and remote women entrepreneurs to start and grow their ventures. Next, outreach efforts were extended to various rural women networks and associations actively engaged in RRR Australia, inviting their female entrepreneur members to participate in the survey via a provided link. After sending out multiple reminders, 109 survey responses were collected. Ten respondents were excluded due to missing data, leaving 99 complete surveys for analysis. The survey was conducted from February to March 2022, and the questionnaire was pretested with 10 participants and refined based on feedback from a panel of experts.

In this study, we aimed to expand upon previous research on venture growth by examining several constructs related to entrepreneurship, leadership, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Specifically, we measured Entrepreneurial Leader Identity (ELI), Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership), and Venture Growth Intention (GI) - in addition to three antecedents of the Theory of Planned Behavior - attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. ELI was measured using four items adapted from Hiller (2005)'s work, including "Developing and nurturing a venture/business is an important part of who I am," "I think of myself as an entrepreneur," "I think of myself as a leader," and "When I describe myself, I would include the word leader." We also adapted a scale developed by Bagheri and Harrison (2020) to measure Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership), which originally focused on followers' perspectives of EL. To reflect on their own EL behavior, respondents were asked to rate seven lower-order components: Framing Challenges (FC) (5 items), Absorbing Uncertainty (AU) (4 items), Underwriting (UW) (5 items), Building Commitment (BC) (5 items), Defining Gravity (DG) (4 items), Opportunity Identification and Exploitation (OIE) (11 items), and Orientation towards Learning (OTI) (5 items).

In addition, the study measured attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in relation to business growth. The construct "attitude towards venture growth" was measured

using two items: "It is important to me to grow my business" and "I am pleased to see my business profitability grow." Subjective norms were measured using four items: "Those closest to me are supportive of me wanting to grow my venture," "Most entrepreneurs whom I know are likely to grow their business in the next few years," "Most of the entrepreneurs like me have grown their businesses within 5 years of establishing their venture/business," and "Most people whose opinions I value would approve of growing my business in the next 5 years." Perceived behavioral control (PBC) was measured using three items: "If I wanted to, I could grow my venture/business in the next 5 years," "Growing my business in the next 5 years is completely up to me," and "Growing my businesses in the next 5 years will be difficult because there's a lot that I cannot control (R)."

Finally, we measured Venture Growth Intention (GI) using a single item adapted from Edelman et al. (2010): "My intention is to grow my venture as large as possible." Respondents rated all items on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree." The reliability and validity of the measurement scales will be discussed in the methods section.

3.2 Data analysis method

In our study, we utilized the PLS-SEM method via Smart PLS 4 software to estimate the parameters of our mediation model. This approach is variance-based and allows us to evaluate construct reliability, validity, and relationships. Specifically, PLS-SEM consists of two main parts: the measurement model and the structural model.

To analyze our model, which includes a higher-order construct Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership), we adopted a disjoint two-stage approach. In the first stage, we developed a model that links the exogenous and endogenous constructs to the lower-order components of Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership). This allowed us to evaluate the measurement model for the lower-order Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership) components, including

factor loadings, reliability, and validity. Once we confirmed the quality of the measurement model, we computed the latent variable scores for the lower-order Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership) component.

In the second stage, we created indicators for the higher-order Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership) using the latent variable scores from the first stage. We then evaluated the quality of the higher-order measurement model before proceeding to hypothesis testing. To test our proposed hypotheses, we followed a method proposed by Preacher and Hayes and outlined by F. Hair Jr et al. (2014). Specifically, we first examined the direct effect between ELI and GI using a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 sub-samples. Once we confirmed the presence of direct effect, we included Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership), Attitude, SN, and PBC as mediators in the model (as shown in Figure 1) and investigated the relationships between ELI, the mediators, and GI.

Taken together, our approach allowed us to thoroughly evaluate the measurement and structural models of our mediation model, while also incorporating a higher-order construct. By following a systematic and rigorous process, we were able to provide robust and reliable results for our study.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement model

The results of the measurement provide evidence for the satisfactory psychometric properties of the lower-order and higher-order constructs. The lower-order measurement model showed satisfactory internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, as indicated by the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE values. The higher-order measurement model also demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for the Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership)

construct. The findings showed that all factor loadings were above the recommended threshold of 0.5, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores were above 0.7, AVE exceeded 0.5, and HTMT values were below 0.9. These results suggest that the constructs measured in this study are reliable and valid. The detailed results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table1: Loading, Reliability, and validity statistics of lower-order components of Entrepreneurial leadership construct

Constructs/ items	Loadings	CR	AVE
AU		0.8	0.577
AU1	0.857		
AU2	0.814		
AU3	0.579		
BC		0.838	0.571
BC2	0.774		
BC3	0.526		
BC4	0.886		
DG		0.835	0.717
BC5	0.789		
DG2	0.853		
DG4	0.840		
FC		0.832	0.555
FC2	0.630		
FC3	0.712		
FC4	0.812		
FC5	0.810		
OIE		0.879	0.514
OIE1	0.648		
OIE10	0.635		
OIE2	0.800		
OIE3	0.845		
OIE4	0.699		
OIE5	0.747		
OIE8	0.610		
OTL		0.823	0.541
OTL2	0.626		
OTL3	0.700		
OTL4	0.718		
OTL5	0.875		
UW		0.831	0.556
UW1	0.703		
UW2	0.866		
UW4	0.798		
UW5	0.586		

Table2: Loading, Reliability, and validity statistics of higher-order measurement model

	loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Ent.lead. Identity		0.894	0.894	0.76
ELI1	0.832			
ELI2	0.89			
ELI3	0.901			
ELI4	0.861			
Attitude		0.764	0.766	0.809
Att1	0.907			
Att2	0.892			
Subjective Norms		0.891	0.892	0.822
SN2	0.887			
SN3	0.912			
SN4	0.92			
PBC		0.888	0.893	0.817
PBC1	0.935			
PBC2	0.901			
PBC3	0.874			
Ent. Leadership		0.871	0.897	0.565
AU	0.776			
BC	0.778			
DG	0.653			
FC	0.701			
OIE	0.84			
OTL	0.708			
UW	0.787			
Growth Intention				
GI	1			

4.2 Structural Model

As presented in Figure 1, the findings of the structural model analysis of latent variables indicate a positive and significant direct effect ($\beta=0.643$, $P<0.001$; Table 3) between Entrepreneurial Leadership Identity (ELI) and Growth Intentions (GI). This result provides support for our first hypothesis (H1), which proposes that ELI among Australian rural, regional and remote (RRR) women has a positive impact on their venture growth intentions.

Furthermore, in line with our second hypothesis (H2), the results demonstrate that ELI has an indirect effect on GI through Attitude ($\beta=0.201$, $P<0.009$; Table 3), and that both ELI and

Attitude have positive and significant effects on GI (ELI: $\beta=0.726$, $P<0.001$; Attitude: $\beta=0.276$, $P<0.007$; Table 4). These outcomes lend support to our sub-hypotheses H2a and H2b.

Similarly, the findings reveal that ELI has an indirect effect on GI through Subjective Norms (SN) ($\beta=0.14$, $P<0.028$; Table 3), providing support for hypothesis H3. Additionally, ELI has a positive and significant impact on SN ($\beta=0.682$, $P<0.001$; Table 4), which in turn has a positive effect on GI ($\beta=0.205$, $P<0.021$; Table 4). These results are consistent with our sub-hypotheses H3a and H3b.

Moreover, the results indicate that ELI has an indirect effect on GI through Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) ($\beta=0.221$, $P<0.01$; Table 3), lending support to hypothesis H4. Furthermore, the findings reveal that ELI has a positive and significant effect on PBC ($\beta=0.646$, $P<0.001$; Table 4), which has a positive effect on GI ($\beta=0.342$, $P<0.001$; Table 4). These results align with our sub-hypotheses H4a and H4b.

Finally, the results demonstrate that ELI has an indirect effect on GI through Entrepreneurial Leadership (Ent. Leadership) ($\beta=0.087$, $P<0.02$; Table 3), supporting hypothesis H5. Furthermore, the findings reveal that ELI has a positive and significant impact on Ent. Leadership ($\beta=0.502$, $P<0.001$; Table 4), which in turn has a positive effect on GI ($\beta=0.173$, $P<0.017$; Table 4). These results are consistent with our sub-hypotheses H5a and H5b.

Table 3: Direct and indirect effect of ELI on GI

	β	T Statistics	P Values
Direct effect			
Ent. Identity -> Growth Intention	0.643	7.591	<0.001
Indirect effect			
Ent. Identity -> Att_ -> Growth Intention	0.201	2.353	0.009
Ent. Identity -> pbc -> Growth Intention	0.221	2.978	0.001
Ent. Identity -> Ent. Leadership -> Growth Intention	0.087	2.053	0.02
Ent. Identity -> SN -> Growth Intention	0.14	1.911	0.028

Table 4: Coefficients of paths from the structural equation model

Constructs path	β	T Statistics	P Values
Ent. Identity -> Att_	0.726	10.801	<0.001
Att_ -> Growth Intention	0.276	2.458	0.007
Ent. Identity -> SN	0.682	8.66	<0.001
SN -> Growth Intention	0.205	2.032	0.021
Ent. Identity -> pbc	0.646	6.578	<0.001
pbc -> Growth Intention	0.342	3.238	0.001
Ent. Identity -> Ent. Leadership	0.502	8.338	<0.001
Ent. Leadership -> Growth Intention	0.173	2.119	0.017
Ent. Identity -> Growth Intention	-0.006	0.064	0.475

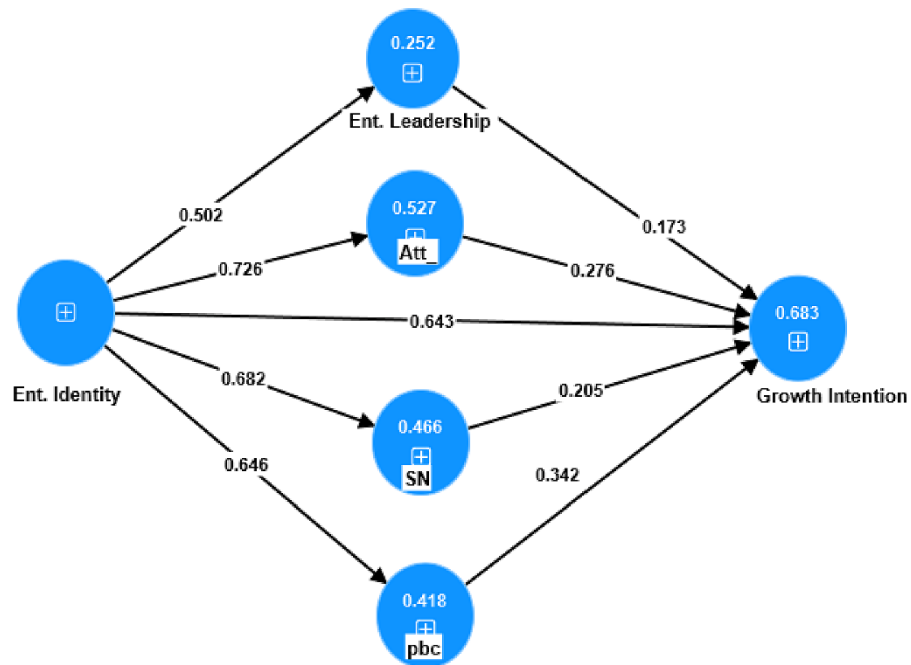


Figure 1: Structural model of total effects of latent variables

5. Discussion

This research paper investigates the intricate relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity (ELI), entrepreneurial leadership, and predictors of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to explain the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in rural Australia. Our

study delves into how ELI influences venture growth intentions through four different mediation paths. Specifically, these mediation paths are attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial leadership. To test our hypotheses, we employed the partial least square model and evaluated the mediation model. To test mediation model we hypothesized the positive relationship between ELI and attitude, ELI and subjective norms, ELI and PBC , ELI and Entrepreneurial leadership, attitudes and GI, subjective norms and GI, PBC and GI, finally, Entrepreneurial leadership and GI. Our analysis provided evidence in support of all the hypotheses proposed. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing insights into the role of ELI in shaping the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs. It underscores the significance of considering the complex interplay between ELI, entrepreneurial leadership, and TPB predictors in enhancing our understanding of entrepreneurship.

Our findings suggest that ELI influences venture growth intentions through attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial leadership. We argue that understanding the socio-cognitive view of attitude and its relationship to identity can provide valuable insights into the factors that influence entrepreneurial venture growth.

The results of our study suggest that entrepreneurial leader identity has a positive effect on attitudes, which in turn has a positive effect on venture growth intentions. Our findings imply that entrepreneurs who have a strong entrepreneurial leader identity are more likely to have positive attitudes towards their ventures, which can ultimately influence their growth intentions. We argue that an entrepreneur's attitude towards their venture can also be seen as an act of identity, through which entrepreneurs communicate their values, beliefs, and aspirations to others (O'Neil et al., 2022).. To support our argument, we drew on the socio-cognitive view of attitude, which posits that attitudes are socially situated and influenced by the environment. We further referenced the concept of "extended cognition," which suggests that cognition is not

solely contained within the brain but also involves external environmental factors (Atkinson, 2010, Billig, 1991, Clark and Chalmers, 1998, Harré and Gillett, 1994). Our findings suggest that an entrepreneur's attitude towards their venture is not solely dependent on their internal mindset, but also influenced by external environmental factors.

Moreover, another hypothesis of our study subjective norms serve as a mediator between ELI and venture growth intentions, based on the social identity theory and the theory of planned behavior. The social identity theory suggests that people identify themselves with certain social groups and adopt the corresponding norms and behaviors, while the theory of planned behavior considers subjective norms as a predictor of intentions. Our findings provide evidence that supports the previous studies by Reicher (1987, 1996) and Terry and Hogg (1996) who discovered that people's social identity triggers depersonalization and conformity to the norms of their group, and that their perception of subjective norms is guided by their identity. As a result, entrepreneurs who strongly identify with the entrepreneurial leadership identity are likely to be influenced by the norms associated with these identities, which can also impact their venture growth intentions. Specifically, in the context of women entrepreneurs in rural Australia, our study suggests that the activation of their entrepreneurial leadership identity can trigger depersonalization, leading to the formation of subjective norms that influence their venture growth intentions.

In our study, we delved into the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity (ELI), perceived behavioral control (PBC), and venture growth intentions. Our results indicate that PBC plays a mediating role in the relationship between ELI and venture growth intentions. This means that the strength of an individual's social identity related to their entrepreneurial leadership behavior can impact their perceived control over their behavior, which ultimately affects their intentions to engage in venture growth activities. These findings align with social identity theory, which suggests that an individual's behavior is influenced by their membership

in a social group and their perception of the group's norms and expectations. Therefore, individuals who strongly identify with the entrepreneurial leadership identity may feel more in control of their behavior and are more likely to engage in behaviors that align with this identity. Moreover, when individuals have adequate social support and resources to achieve a specific behavior, their perceived ability to control their behavior increases, ultimately boosting their intentions to engage in venture growth activities.

Our results also support Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, which is closely related to PBC. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to execute a specific behavior successfully. We found that individuals with a strong ELI may have higher perceived behavioral control, which can further increase their intentions to engage in venture growth activities. This finding is especially important for women entrepreneurs, who may face additional obstacles and challenges in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The findings of our study indicate that perceived entrepreneurial leadership plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between ELI and venture growth intentions. Our argument that entrepreneurial leadership arises from social categorization and depersonalization processes linked to entrepreneurial leadership identity is consistent with the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001), which posits that leadership emerges from fundamental social cognitive processes that cause individuals to perceive themselves in terms of the defining characteristics of a common and distinctive ingroup. In this context, entrepreneurial leaders can leverage their social identity and their perceived entrepreneurial leadership to influence the motivation of their venture's growth. Our study shows that entrepreneurial leadership can positively impact venture growth intentions, which is consistent with previous research (Koryak et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant given the increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship as a driver of economic growth and innovation. Moreover, the ability and competencies of an entrepreneurial leader in identifying and leveraging entrepreneurial

opportunities, which is reflected in their perceived entrepreneurial leadership is guided by their entrepreneurial leadership identity and are more likely to envision their venture's growth, leading to a positive impact on their intentions to expand their business.

The findings of this study have both practical and theoretical implications. From a practical perspective, our study provides insights for policymakers, practitioners, and women entrepreneurs in rural areas of Australia.

The practical and theoretical implications of this study are significant. Firstly, policymakers, practitioners, and women entrepreneurs in rural areas of Australia can benefit from our findings. By focusing on enhancing the entrepreneurial leader identity of women entrepreneurs through training, mentorship programs, and a platform for sharing experiences and support, policymakers and practitioners can create a supportive environment that encourages entrepreneurs to grow their ventures. Additionally, interventions that target social norms associated with entrepreneurial leadership identity can be effective in increasing venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Our study indicates that women entrepreneurs in rural Australia can improve their venture growth intentions by enhancing their entrepreneurial leader identity (ELI). To achieve this, women entrepreneurs should seek mentorship and training opportunities while adopting entrepreneurial and leadership behaviors. Such actions can enhance their attitudes towards venture growth, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and ELI, leading to a positive impact on venture growth intentions. Developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, building strong social networks, increasing perceived behavioral control over venture growth, and improving entrepreneurial leadership skills can all contribute to increased success for women entrepreneurs.

From a theoretical standpoint, our study contributes to the literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity, TPB predictors, and venture growth intentions. Specifically, our findings suggest that entrepreneurial leader identity is a multidimensional construct that influences venture growth intentions through attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial leadership. These findings extend the TPB by highlighting the role of entrepreneurial leader identity in shaping venture growth intentions. From a theoretical perspective, our study contributes to the literature on entrepreneurship by providing valuable insights into the complex interplay between ELI, TPB predictors, and venture growth intentions. Our findings suggest that the socio-cognitive view of attitude and social identity theory can be applied to the entrepreneurship context to explain the interplay between ELI, TPB predictors, and venture growth intentions. This expands our understanding of the role of ELI in shaping the venture growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in rural areas and provides a theoretical foundation for future research in this area. Besides, our study contributes to the literature on entrepreneurial leadership by providing insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationship between ELI and venture growth intentions. Our results suggest that entrepreneurial leaders can leverage their social identity and perceived entrepreneurial leadership to influence their venture's growth motivation and intentions, highlighting the importance of both individual and social factors in entrepreneurial leadership.

It is important to note some limitations of our study. First, the data were self-reported, which may introduce bias and affect the accuracy of the findings. To address the potential bias introduced by self-reported data in future studies, we recommend the use of multiple methods, such as interviews or observations, to supplement the self-reported data. This triangulation approach can provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture. Second, our sample was limited to a specific geographic region and may not be representative of the broader population.

To address the limitation of generalizability in future studies, researchers can consider using a more diverse and representative sample. This can be achieved by recruiting participants from different regions, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds to increase the sample's variability and reduce potential biases. Finally, the study's cross-sectional design poses a limitation in establishing causal relationships between the variables. While our research was informed by theoretical assumptions, future studies that adopt longitudinal or experimental designs may offer more compelling evidence to determine the causal links between these constructs.

Despite the limitations, our study's findings contribute to advancing our comprehension of a new research domain in the RRR context, and they underscore the need for further exploration into the effects of EL identity and Entrepreneurial leadership on the venture growth intentions of RRR entrepreneurs.

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5.2 Summary

In summary, Chapter 5 presented the empirical findings from the third research study, providing valuable insights into the interplay between EL identity, EL, predictors of the TPB (including attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) and venture growth intentions among women in rural Australia. The rigorous data analysis conducted in this chapter confirmed the proposed hypotheses, revealing a significant and positive relationship between EL identity, EL competency, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and growth intentions. Furthermore, the findings highlight the mediating roles of EL, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. These findings have practical implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers, contributing to the understanding of EL dynamics and providing guidance for fostering venture growth. Moving forward to Chapter 6, the concluding chapter of this thesis, the implications of the findings of the studies are discussed in relation to the RQs. This discussion enhances the comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence entrepreneurial growth intentions and contributes to the existing body of literature on women entrepreneurship and EL. Chapter 5 played a crucial role in connecting theory to practice, offering valuable insights into the complexities of EL and paving the way for the concluding remarks in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 established the foundation of the thesis, outlining the background, problem statement, research objectives and methodology. Chapter 2 expanded upon this groundwork by presenting a concise literature review, theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks. Through a critical examination of existing scholarly works and identification of gaps in the literature, Chapter 2 established the theoretical framework that guided the subsequent empirical analysis.

Building upon the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 presented the first research study, which focused on the relationship between EL identity, passion and venture growth intentions. This empirical investigation contributed valuable insights to the specific research area and furthered the understanding of EL and venture growth. The findings of Chapter 3, in addition to the theoretical foundations established in Chapter 2, suggest the possibility of other variables that relate to entrepreneurial identity and growth intentions.

Chapter 4 presented Paper 2, which delved into the relationship between entrepreneurial identity, EL and venture growth intentions. By examining these interconnections, this chapter provided a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the context of RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

Chapter 5 presented Paper 3, which integrated the findings from Paper 1 and Paper 2, incorporating EL into the TPB to predict venture growth intentions. This chapter brought together the empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks to develop a comprehensive model for understanding and predicting venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs.

This chapter is the final chapter of this PhD thesis. It focuses on the discussion and practical implications derived from the research. The primary objective of this study was to develop a theoretical model for growth intentions and to investigate the impact of EL factors on the venture growth intentions of women in RRR enterprises in Australia. To achieve this objective, several RQs and sub-RQs were formulated. These guided the investigation and analysis of the data. The sections that follow provide a comprehensive overview of the Research Questions and their corresponding findings, followed by the practical implications of the study.

Research Questions:

- RQ1: Does the ‘entrepreneurial leadership identity’ of RRR women entrepreneurs affect their intention to grow their ventures?
- RQ2: Is there a positive relationship between the entrepreneurial leader identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial passion?
- RQ3: Does entrepreneurial passion affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs?
- RQ4: Does entrepreneurial leadership identity affect the entrepreneurial leadership competencies of RRR women entrepreneurs?
- RQ5: Do entrepreneurial leadership competencies affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs?
- RQ6: How can entrepreneurial leadership identity and entrepreneurial leadership integrate into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of women in RRR Australia?
- RQ6a: Do attitudes towards the venture mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and venture growth intentions?
- RQ6b: Do the subjective norms of women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions?
- RQ6c: Does the perceived behavioural control of women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions?
- RQ6d: Does the entrepreneurial leadership that is perceived by women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership identity and venture growth intentions?

6.2 Discussion

6.2.1 RQ1: Does the ‘entrepreneurial leadership identity’ of RRR women entrepreneurs affect their intention to grow their ventures?

The first RQ aimed to investigate the influence of EL identity on the venture growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. Despite an extensive amount of research on entrepreneurial intentions, there remains a significant gap in the literature about growth intentions, specifically, among women entrepreneurs (Costin 2012). This RQ addressed this gap by exploring the ways that the identity of RRR women entrepreneurs as entrepreneurial leaders shapes their intentions to pursue growth for their ventures.

The findings from Paper 1 reveal a strong positive relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs. The study demonstrated that women who strongly identify themselves as entrepreneurial leaders display a greater inclination towards pursuing growth for their ventures. These findings are consistent with those of prior studies, such as the meta-analysis conducted by Rise et al. (2010), which indicate that self-identity significantly contributes to the variance in intentions. Moreover, these findings align with the growing body of evidence that supports the integration of identity into the TPB as a predictor of intentions, as evidenced by studies conducted by Conner and Armitage (1998), Zaman et al. (2022) and Ataei et al. (2021). Consequently, it can be inferred that RRR women entrepreneurs who have a strong EL identity exhibit higher levels of motivation and commitment towards the growth of their ventures.

This RQ addressed a notable research gap by investigating the impact of EL identity on venture growth intentions, specifically, among RRR women entrepreneurs. The positive relationship that was identified between these constructs enhances the understanding of the factors that influence growth aspirations and helps to explain the unique challenges and motivations of RRR women entrepreneurs in their pursuit of venture growth. Moreover, these findings contribute to the theoretical discourse on venture growth dynamics and offer practical implications for policymakers and support organisations who are seeking to foster entrepreneurial success among RRR women entrepreneurs.

6.2.2 RQ2: Is there a positive relationship between the entrepreneurial leader identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial passion?

The investigation into the relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and EP among Australian RRR women entrepreneurs is a relatively understudied area in the entrepreneurship literature. Although prior studies have explored the connection between identity and passion in the entrepreneurial context (e.g. Drnovsek et al. 2016; Fisher et al. 2018; Murad et al. 2021), there has been limited focus on examining the potential link between passion and specific entrepreneurial identities, such as the entrepreneurial leader identity. Hence, this study sought to address this research gap by exploring whether a positive relationship exists between the entrepreneurial leader identity of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs and their EP.

The findings presented in Paper 1 contribute valuable insights to this relationship, uncovering a positive correlation between entrepreneurial leader identity and EP among Australian RRR women entrepreneurs. The findings indicate that RRR women entrepreneurs who identify themselves strongly as entrepreneurial leaders also exhibit a higher level of EP.

This empirical evidence aligns with previous scholarly works that have emphasised the significant influence of identity on passion within the entrepreneurial domain (Vallerand et al. 2007; Cardon, Wincent, et al. 2009). Furthermore, it is consistent with a recent study by Stevenson et al. (2023), which also identified a substantial positive link between entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurial passion, further strengthening the relevance and significance of these findings.

Support for this relationship can be found in the theoretical foundations provided by Vallerand et al. (2003) and Cardon, Wincent, et al. (2009), who have proposed that passion experiences are deeply intertwined with self-defining activities that hold personal significance. Therefore, it can be inferred that a robust entrepreneurial leader identity plays a crucial role in fostering and sustaining EP among RRR women entrepreneurs.

By uncovering the positive relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and EP, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes. It highlights the importance of considering entrepreneurial identity as a key driver of EP thereby providing insights that can inform entrepreneurship education and support programs and policy initiatives aimed at fostering entrepreneurial success among RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

6.2.3 RQ3: Does entrepreneurial passion affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs?

The third RQ aimed to examine the influence of EP on the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. Prior studies have extensively explored the impact of EP on various outcomes in entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurial intention and venture growth (Baum & Locke 2004; Roberts & Welsch 2010; De Clercq et al. 2013; Brink 2015; Drnovsek et al. 2016; Huyghe et al. 2016; Neneh 2020). However, the specific relationship between EP and growth intentions, specifically, in the context of women entrepreneurship and RRR women entrepreneurs, remains relatively unexplored.

The findings from Paper 1 indicated no significant relationship between EP and venture growth intentions among Australian RRR women entrepreneurs. This finding diverges from those of prior studies that have highlighted the importance of passion as a key predictor of behavioural intentions. Studies conducted by Boyd and Vozikis (1994), Biraglia and Kadile (2017), Javid and Al-Hashimi (2020) and Murad et al. (2021) have shown a positive association between EP and entrepreneurial intentions. However, in the specific context of RRR women entrepreneurs who identify themselves as entrepreneurial leaders, the

non-significant relationship suggests that possessing a higher level of EP may not necessarily drive growth intentions.

This finding contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the nuanced nature of the relationship between EP and growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs. Although EP has been linked to other entrepreneurial outcomes, its impact on growth intentions may be more complex and context dependent. These findings underscore the need for further exploration and understanding of the motivational factors and drivers of growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs.

6.2.4 RQ4: Does entrepreneurial leadership identity affect the entrepreneurial leadership competencies of RRR women entrepreneurs?

Scholars have extensively debated the influence of identity on individuals' journeys towards becoming leaders and the subsequent impact on their leadership behaviour (Markus et al. 1990; Day et al. 2008; Kwok et al. 2018). It is widely recognised that developing a sense of leadership identity is a fundamental aspect of assuming leadership roles and responsibilities. Individuals' identities, shaped by their beliefs, values and self-perceptions, play a pivotal role in guiding their behaviour and decision-making processes (Snook et al. 2010; Guillén et al. 2015; Epitropaki et al. 2017). Consequently, understanding the relationship between EL identity and leadership competencies becomes crucial in unravelling the dynamics of entrepreneurial growth. When we refer to the "dynamics of entrepreneurial growth," we are alluding to the complex processes, interactions, and interdependencies that underpin and drive the phenomenon of business growth. These dynamics encompass a wide array of factors, forces, and mechanisms that collectively contribute to the growth and development of entrepreneurial ventures over time. However, despite the significance of identity in the leadership domain, there remains a gap in the literature about the specific link between EL identity and EL competencies.

Moving forward, Paper 2 aimed to address this research gap by investigating the association between EL identity and EL competencies among RRR women entrepreneurs. The study helped to explain the influence of entrepreneurial identity on the acquisition and demonstration of essential skills and competencies that are necessary for effective venture management and growth. The findings reveal a positive relationship between EL identity and leadership competencies, aligning with prior research conducted by Miscenko et al. (2017) that also showed a correlation between leader identity and leadership competencies.

These findings underscore the crucial role that EL identity plays in shaping the competencies of RRR women entrepreneurs. By strongly identifying themselves as

entrepreneurial leaders, these individuals are more likely to possess the necessary skills and capabilities that are required to effectively lead and manage their ventures. The significance of this finding lies in its contribution to the existing literature, emphasising the pivotal role of identity in the development and application of leadership competencies among RRR women entrepreneurs.

6.2.5 RQ5: Do entrepreneurial leadership competencies affect the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs?

RQ5 addresses the influence of EL competencies on the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs. Prior studies have established a positive association between entrepreneurial competencies, leadership competencies and entrepreneurial intentions (Sánchez 2011, 2013; Costa et al. 2016; González-López et al. 2020), underscoring the significance of these competencies in entrepreneurial development. However, there remains a dearth of research that explores the ways that entrepreneurs perceive themselves as leaders and the effects of leadership self-perceptions on venture growth intentions.

To address this research gap, Paper 2 investigated the relationship between EL competencies and growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs. The findings reveal a statistically significant and positive correlation between these two variables, indicating that RRR women entrepreneurs who possess higher levels of entrepreneurial competencies are more likely to exhibit stronger growth intentions for their ventures. These outcomes are in line with prior studies conducted by Fuller et al. (2018) and Chang et al. (2020), further reinforcing the pivotal role of EL competencies in shaping growth intentions.

These findings have important implications for the development and enhancement of EL competencies among RRR women entrepreneurs. By acquiring and refining the necessary skills and capabilities that are associated with effective EL, these individuals can better navigate the entrepreneurial landscape, seize growth opportunities and drive the success of their ventures. This study contributes to the existing literature by emphasising the positive influence of EL competencies on growth intentions thus helping to explain the significance of these competencies in entrepreneurial endeavours.

The practical implications of these findings extend to policymakers and entrepreneurship support organisations. Recognising the instrumental role of EL competencies in shaping growth intentions can inform the design and implementation of targeted initiatives and programs aimed at fostering the development of these competencies among RRR women entrepreneurs. By providing tailored resources, mentoring and training opportunities, policymakers can cultivate a supportive environment that empowers RRR

women entrepreneurs to unlock their leadership potential thereby fuelling the growth and prosperity of their ventures.

6.2.6 RQ6: How can entrepreneurial leadership identity and entrepreneurial leadership integrate into the theory of planned behaviour to predict venture growth intentions of women in RRR Australia?

Prior studies have emphasised the importance of self-identity in predicting behavioural intentions (Armitage et al. 1999; Smith et al. 2008; Escalas et al. 2013; Carfora et al. 2016; Carfora et al. 2017). However, there is a research gap about the specific influence of EL identity on venture growth intentions, specifically, among women entrepreneurs in RRR areas of Australia. In addition, limited research has explored the interplay between EL identity, EL and the TPB in understanding venture growth. This research gap presented an opportunity to investigate the connections between these constructs and help to explain the factors that influence venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs.

To address the research gap, RQ6 examined sub-questions that related to attitudes towards the venture, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and perceived EL. The findings from Paper 3 provide valuable insights into the mediating roles of these factors.

RQ6a investigated the mediating role of attitudes towards the venture in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. The findings indicate that a strong entrepreneurial leader identity positively influences attitudes, which, subsequently, influences venture growth intentions. This suggests that RRR women entrepreneurs who identify strongly as entrepreneurial leaders tend to develop positive attitudes towards their ventures, which, in turn, shape their intentions for growth.

RQ6b focused on the mediating effect of subjective norms in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. The findings reveal that subjective norms play a mediating role, which aligns with social identity theory (Turner 1982; Abrams & Hogg 1988) and the TPB (Ajzen 1985). RRR women entrepreneurs who strongly identify with EL are influenced by the norms associated with this identity. These subjective norms could affect their venture growth intentions by inducing depersonalisation and conformity to group norms.

In order to reshape social norms tied to Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) identity, a comprehensive approach is vital. Initiatives encompass educational campaigns, showcasing role models, mentorship programs, and online networking. Communication channels, including social media, can disseminate the importance of EL identity. Collaboration with educational institutions and government support creates a conducive environment. Research,

publications, and professional partnerships play crucial roles. Celebrating diversity and public recognition further motivate individuals, gradually influencing social norms over time.

RQ6c explored the mediating role of perceived behavioural control in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. The findings indicate that perceived behavioural control acts as a mediator. RRR women entrepreneurs who have a strong EL identity perceive a greater level of control over their behaviour, which, subsequently, influences their intentions to engage in activities that promote venture growth. This finding aligns with social identity theory (Turner 1982; Abrams & Hogg 1988) and Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (Bandura 1982), underscoring the influence of social identity and perceived ability on behavioural control and intentions.

RQ6d examined the mediating effect of perceived EL in the relationship between EL identity and venture growth intentions. The findings highlight the significant role of perceived EL as a mediator. Further, they suggest that RRR women entrepreneurs who identify strongly as entrepreneurial leaders use their social identity and perceived EL to influence their motivations for venture growth. This underscores the importance of EL in envisioning and driving growth in ventures.

In summary, the collective findings from Papers 1, 2 and 3 contribute to the integration of EL identity and EL into the TPB framework. The mediating roles of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and perceived EL provide insights into the complex mechanisms through which these constructs influence venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia. By incorporating these constructs into the TPB framework, a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence venture growth intentions can be attained thus facilitating the development of effective strategies and interventions to support women entrepreneurs in RRR areas.

6.3 Contribution of thesis

This section highlights the significant contributions of the thesis, which encompass theoretical advancements and practical implications in the field of EL and venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in RRR areas of Australia.

6.3.1 Theoretical contributions

First, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between EL identity, predictors of the TPB and venture growth intentions. By integrating concepts from social identity theory and identity theory into

the TPB framework, this study offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that enriches understanding of the complex dynamics that underlie the growth intentions of Australian rural women entrepreneurs. The findings extend the TPB by highlighting the role of EL in shaping venture growth intentions thus providing a theoretical foundation for future studies in this area.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature on EL by providing insights into the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between EL factors and venture growth intentions. By exploring the interplay between EL identity, psychological constructs and growth intentions, this study helps to explain the importance of individual and social factors in EL.

Moreover, this thesis advances theoretical understanding by highlighting the role of EL identity in shaping key constructs, such as passion, EL, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. By elucidating the interplay between these constructs and their influence on venture growth intentions, the thesis expands the knowledge of the factors that drive entrepreneurial outcomes.

In addition to its current theoretical contributions, this study paves the way for future research in the field by suggesting potential areas of exploration. Future directions could involve investigating the broader applicability of the integrated framework across diverse entrepreneurial contexts, exploring how identity and EL factors influence other aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour, and assessing the transferability of these findings to entrepreneurship in different geographic and cultural settings. Furthermore, research might delve into practical applications of these theoretical insights, examining how interventions and support programs can be designed to empower women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural and underrepresented communities, to foster sustainable venture growth.

6.3.2 Practical contribution

From a practical standpoint, this study has significant implications for policymakers, practitioners and women entrepreneurs in rural areas of Australia. The findings offer insights that can inform policy decisions aimed at promoting and supporting women's entrepreneurship in RRR areas. By focusing on enhancing the entrepreneurial leader identity of women entrepreneurs through training, mentorship programs and the creation of platforms for sharing experiences and support, policymakers and practitioners can foster a supportive environment that encourages entrepreneurs to grow their ventures. In addition, interventions that target social norms associated with EL identity can be effective in increasing venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in rural areas. To shift social norms

associated with Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) identity among women entrepreneurs in remote, rural, and regional areas, a comprehensive strategy is crucial. This strategy should encompass educational campaigns, role model showcases, mentorship programs, and online networking platforms. Leveraging communication channels, including social media, can amplify the importance of EL identity. Collaboration with educational institutions and government support can create a supportive ecosystem. Recognising diversity and publicly acknowledging achievements can further motivate individuals, gradually reshaping social norms over time.

The practical implications also extend to entrepreneurship support organisations. Recognising the instrumental role of EL competencies in shaping growth intentions, these organisations can design and implement initiatives and programs that foster the development of these competencies among RRR women entrepreneurs. By providing tailored resources, mentoring and training opportunities, support organisations can empower RRR women entrepreneurs to unlock their leadership potential and drive the growth and prosperity of their ventures.

Notably, the "Accelerating Female Founders Program" initiated by the Queensland government is geared towards advancing business growth among women in Queensland. Nonetheless, it predominantly emphasises skill development, and its focus tends to overlook the critical social dimensions of entrepreneurial growth. This research underscores the profound significance of fortifying the Entrepreneurial Leader (EL) identity, which, in turn, significantly influences entrepreneurial behaviours and growth intentions.

To rectify this oversight, it is advisable for the government to formulate policies that actively support women in establishing and reinforcing their identity as entrepreneurial leaders. An effective starting point is to incentivise women entrepreneurs to engage in collaborative platforms. Within these platforms, comprehensive programs can be implemented, adopting a holistic approach to nurture women entrepreneurs' social identity as entrepreneurial leaders.

The predominant policy emphasis on skill development creates challenges by attracting women entrepreneurs already intrinsically motivated to grow their businesses. Consequently, those women entrepreneurs with lower intentions to expand their ventures, more significantly influenced by their identification as entrepreneurial leaders, are inadvertently excluded. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt a more balanced approach to ensure the inclusivity and effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs in Queensland.

6.3.3 Overall contribution

The collective findings of this thesis contribute to the integration of EL identity and EL into the TPB framework. By incorporating EL identity and its influence on attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and perceived EL, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence venture growth intentions among RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia. These insights facilitate the development of effective strategies, interventions and support mechanisms to empower and promote the growth of women entrepreneurs in RRR areas.

Furthermore, this study addresses theoretical and practical research gaps. The exploration of EL identity as a construct and its relationship with venture growth represents a novel approach in the context of women entrepreneurship, specifically, in RRR areas. In addition, the study addresses the lack of knowledge about the growth intentions of RRR women entrepreneurs and contributes to the conceptualisation of explanatory growth theories that are specific to this group.

In conclusion, this thesis makes significant contributions to the field of entrepreneurship by providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence venture growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in RRR areas of Australia. The theoretical framework that was developed in this study integrates the TPB with social identity theory and identity theory thus offering valuable insights into the complex dynamics that underlie growth intentions. The practical implications extend to policymakers, practitioners and entrepreneurship support organisations, guiding the development of initiatives and programs that enhance EL competencies and empower RRR women entrepreneurs to achieve growth and success in their ventures. Overall, this study advances the understanding of the interplay between EL, psychological constructs and growth intentions, paving the way for future researchers and policy.

6.4 Limitations of study

The present study, despite its contributions, is not without limitations. These limitations need to be acknowledged to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research findings and to identify areas for future investigation.

One significant limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, which precludes the establishment of causality between the variables under investigation. Although the research assumptions were theoretically grounded, the cross-sectional nature of the study limited the ability to make definitive causal claims. To address this limitation, it is

recommended that future studies employ longitudinal or experimental designs to explore the temporal relationships between the constructs. Such designs would provide stronger evidence for establishing causality and enhance the validity of the findings.

Another limitation of this study lies in its focus on a specific demographic that resides in rural and regional areas of Queensland. Consequently, caution should be exercised when generalising the findings to other contexts or populations. The sample's regional specificity restricts the generalisability of the study's conclusions beyond this demographic. To mitigate this limitation, future researchers could employ a more diverse and representative sample that encompasses participants from various regions, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. This approach would enhance the external validity of the findings and allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena across populations.

The data collected in this study used self-reported measures, which introduces the possibility of bias and may affect the accuracy of the findings. Self-reporting measures are subject to individual interpretation and memory biases, potentially affecting the reliability and validity of the results. To address this limitation in future studies, it is recommended to incorporate multiple data collection methods, such as interviews or observations, to complement the self-reported data. The use of a triangulation approach that involves multiple data sources would yield a more robust and comprehensive data set, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

Although this study primarily employed quantitative methods, further investigation through qualitative research is warranted. Specifically, the non-significant relationship between EP and venture growth intention that was reported in this study requires exploration through qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research can offer valuable insights into the underlying dynamics and reasons behind this relationship, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, it is suggested that future studies incorporate qualitative research methods to elucidate the complexities and intricacies of the variables under investigation.

Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge the critical importance of recognising that the term "grow my venture" is subject to multifaceted interpretations. The ambiguity surrounding its meaning prompts reflection on whether "growth" exclusively pertains to financial gains or if it encompasses broader dimensions, such as expanding the workforce or focusing on metrics related to a purpose-driven approach.

While our study has made valuable strides by investigating the positive relationship between entrepreneurial leader identity and entrepreneurial passion (EP) among Australian RRR women entrepreneurs, it is evident that the context-dependent nature of "growth" is a vital consideration that warrants further exploration. We concede that our research could have

probed more deeply into understanding how these entrepreneurs interpret and prioritise growth within their unique context. The multifaceted nature of growth, embracing financial, operational, and social dimensions, should have been a central focus of our inquiry.

Future research endeavours can build upon these considerations by engaging in qualitative interviews or surveys to capture the nuanced perspectives of Australian RRR women entrepreneurs regarding what "growth" means to them and how their entrepreneurial leader identity intertwines with these interpretations. Such investigations will provide a more comprehensive comprehension of the context-dependent aspects of growth, thereby informing entrepreneurship education, support initiatives, and policy measures customised to the specific needs and aspirations of RRR women entrepreneurs in Australia.

6.5 Opportunities for future studies

The limitations identified in this study present opportunities for future researchers to expand on the current knowledge and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Addressing these limitations would enhance the validity, generalisability and depth of the findings. Specifically, future studies can adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causality, include diverse and representative samples, employ multiple data collection methods to minimise bias and incorporate qualitative research to explore the underlying dynamics. Moreover, integrating qualitative research methods to delve into the underlying dynamics could provide valuable insights. Specifically, future research endeavours might include qualitative interviews or surveys to capture the nuanced perspectives of Australian rural and regional women entrepreneurs concerning their interpretation of "growth" and its intertwining with their entrepreneurial leader identity. By addressing these limitations, researchers can advance the field of EL and venture growth intentions among rural and regional women entrepreneurs, ultimately informing practice and policy.

6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research conducted in this study provided valuable insights and made significant contributions to the understanding of the roles of EL competencies, identity and passion in the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia.

The findings highlight the critical importance of developing and enhancing EL skills among women in RRR areas. Stronger entrepreneurial skills are associated with greater

growth aspirations, emphasising the positive influence of EL competencies on growth intentions.

Furthermore, the study underscored the profound impact of EL identity on growth intentions. Women who strongly identify as entrepreneurial leaders demonstrate positive attitudes towards their ventures and are influenced by the subjective norms associated with this identity. Their perceived behavioural control and leveraged EL further fuel their intentions to pursue venture growth. These findings emphasise the significance of cultivating a robust EL identity as a catalyst for entrepreneurial success and regional economic development.

In addition, the study revealed the complex interplay of EP in terms of growth intentions. Although the relationship between EP and venture growth intention among RRR women entrepreneurs was not found to be statistically significant, further exploration through qualitative research is recommended to better understand the dynamics and reasons behind this non-significant relationship.

Beyond theoretical implications, the integration of EL competencies, identity and passion into the TPB enriched the existing literature on entrepreneurship, leadership and behavioural theories. This integration offered a deeper understanding of the multifaceted factors that influence growth intentions in entrepreneurial contexts.

From a practical standpoint, the findings hold important implications for policymakers, business support organisations and educators. Designing targeted programs and interventions that foster the development of EL competencies, nurture a strong entrepreneurial identity and acknowledge the role of EP among women in RRR areas is crucial. By providing necessary support and resources, these stakeholders can empower women entrepreneurs, enhance their growth intentions and drive economic growth in rural and regional communities.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The findings are specific to the context of RRR Australia and caution should be exercised when generalising the results to other regions. In addition, the reliance on self-reporting measures may introduce bias and social desirability effects. Future research endeavours should explore these relationships in diverse contexts and employ a variety of research methodologies to enhance the robustness and validity of the findings.

In conclusion, this study contributes significantly to the understanding of EL competencies, identity, passion and their impact on growth intentions among women entrepreneurs in RRR Australia. Recognising the significance of EL skills, identity and passion is pivotal in enabling women entrepreneurs to achieve their growth ambitions and

contribute to the sustainable development of rural and regional areas. Moving forward, continued support and empowerment of women in entrepreneurship are essential to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages their entrepreneurial aspirations, fosters their passion and fuels their growth and success.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Human ethics approval

20/07/2023, 09:57

University of Southern Queensland Mail - [RIMS] USQ HRE Application - H21REA131 - Expedited review outcome -Approved



Purushottam Dhakal <u1131904@umail.usq.edu.au>

[RIMS] USQ HRE Application - H21REA131 - Expedited review outcome - Approved

1 message

human.Ethics@usq.edu.au <human.Ethics@usq.edu.au>
To: U1131904@umail.usq.edu.au
Cc: Retha.Wiesner@usq.edu.au

Mon, Jul 5, 2021 at 9:49 AM

Dear Purushottam

I am pleased to confirm your Human Research Ethics (HRE) application has now been reviewed by the University's Expedited Review process. As your research proposal has been deemed to meet the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), ethical approval is granted as follows:

USQ HREC ID: H21REA131
Project title: An examination of the impact of entrepreneurial leadership factors on the venture growth intentions of women in rural, regional and remote enterprises
Approval date: 05/07/2021
Expiry date: 05/07/2024
USQ HREC status: Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- a) responsibly conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal;
- b) advise the University ([email:ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au](mailto:ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au)) immediately of any complaint pertaining to the conduct of the research or any other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project;
- c) promptly report any adverse events or unexpected outcomes to the University ([email: ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au](mailto:ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au)) and take prompt action to deal with any unexpected risks;
- d) make submission for any amendments to the project and obtain approval prior to implementing such changes;
- e) provide a progress 'milestone report' when requested and at least for every year of approval.
- f) provide a final 'milestone report' when the project is complete;
- g) promptly advise the University if the project has been discontinued, using a final 'milestone report'.

The additional conditionals of approval for this project are:

(a) Nil.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of this approval or requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018, and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007 may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.
Congratulations on your ethical approval! Wishing you all the best for success!

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to make contact with an Ethics Officer.

Kind regards

Human Research Ethics

University of Southern Queensland
Toowoomba – Queensland – 4350 – Australia
Email: human.ethics@usq.edu.au

This email (including any attached files) is confidential and is

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=61d70022bf&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1704400089858158848&simpl=msg-f:17044000898581...> 1/2

Appendix B: Tools



The Entrepreneurial Leadership and Venture Growth Intentions of Women In Rural, Regional and Remote Enterprises

Advancing Women-owned Businesses in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

Help advance research to enable Women in Rural, Regional and Remote Enterprises to progress their entrepreneurial journeys and unleash the business growth of their ventures!

This research examines the factors impacting the intention of Australian Women in Rural, Regional and Remote Enterprises to be entrepreneurial leaders and grow their ventures/businesses. Addressing barriers that women-owned ventures face to finance and other structural barriers to participation would bring significant economic gains.

This research aims to stimulate lasting systemic change by promoting women's entrepreneurial leadership and the growth of women-owned ventures and businesses in Rural, Regional and Remote Enterprises.

By filling out this survey, you will be able to download the complimentary Toolkit: "Taking Your Business Vision and Making it Real".

This research is led by Professor Retha Wiesner and Doctoral Candidate Puru Dhakal, in the Institute for Resilient Regions at the University of Southern Queensland.

The Entrepreneurial Leadership and Venture Growth Intentions of Women In Rural, Regional and Remote Enterprises Survey

Why Participate?

- Contribute to a better understanding of the factors impacting upon the entrepreneurial leadership and business growth intentions of Australian women in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia;
- Enable you to reflect on your entrepreneurial leadership and business growth intentions;
- Enable the development of a practical framework for entrepreneurial leadership development and business growth of women in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia;
- Provide you with access to a link to download a toolkit to take your business vision and make it real, as a token of our appreciation for completing the survey.

Who Can Participate?

- Women in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia (with a venture or business that is at any stage of development);
- Over the age of 18.

The survey is anonymous and your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage prior to submitting the survey. However, please be assured that all data in the survey are anonymous and you won't be able to be identified. If you have any questions about filling the survey out, please contact Retha Wiesner at retha.wiesner@usq.edu.au or Mobile 0412471839.

It will take approximately 40 minutes to complete this survey. We want to make sure we capture key information to enable us to not only understand your entrepreneurial leadership but also your intentions to grow your venture. So please make yourself a cup of coffee/tea and work your way through the survey. If you find you don't have time to complete the survey in one sitting, please don't discard the questionnaire. Simply Exit the survey, and later return to where you were up to by clicking again on the survey link (or paste it into your browser) and completing the remaining questions. (This function will be

available provided you use the same device/browser and have 'Remember history' and 'Cookies' enabled. Should you encounter any technical issues please see our contact details below.)

YOUR PRIVACY

We understand that some of the answers you may provide will be sensitive in nature. **We give an unequivocal undertaking that your responses are *strictly confidential and anonymous*.** Only the research team will have access to the data for analysis purposes and data will be securely stored in a de-identified format. The survey is carried out in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Our published findings will refer *only* to the overall figures which emerge from the responses. In addition, by completing this survey it is understood that you permit the research team to use, in context, any de-identified information gathered by the survey.

You are able to request a copy of the research report by contacting the research team directly (contact details below).

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely, as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure (<https://policy.usq.edu.au/documents/151985PL#4.3>)

CONTACT US

Please don't hesitate to contact Retha Wiesner at retha.wiesner@usq.edu.au or on 0412471839 should you have any concerns or queries.

By submitting this survey, you agree that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 18 years of age

COMPLEMENTARY TOOLKIT

As a gesture of our appreciation for filling out the survey, you will be able to download the complimentary Toolkit: "Taking Your Business Vision and Making it Real". The content of this Toolkit is extremely helpful in focusing one's attention on what matters most when one is seeking to progress one's business/venture.

After submitting the survey, you will be redirected to a webpage where you can download the Booklet.

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS SURVEY AT THE LATEST BY 11 FEBRUARY 2022.

THANK YOU for allocating some of your very valuable time to fill out the survey and help advance women in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia!



The Entrepreneurial Leadership and Venture Growth Intentions of Women In Rural, Regional
and Remote Enterprises

SECTION A) YOU AND YOUR ENTERPRISE

1. Have you ever started or bought into a business?

- Yes
 No

2. Is your venture a family business? (That is, the family owns more than 50% of the shareholding)

- Yes
 No

3. Are you the sole owner of the venture/business?

- Yes
 No

4. When was your business/organisation
established?

- I have a great idea but but I haven't started my venture yet
 Less than 3 months
 3 to 6 months ago
 6 months to 1 year
 more than 1 and less than 3 years
 3 to 5 years
 more than 5 and less than 10 years
 More than 10 years

5. How many employees does your business/venture have?

- 0 (just me as the owner / co-owner)
- 1 to 3
- 4 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 50
- 51 to 100
- 101 to 200
- more than 200

6. For the last financial year, was your venture's profitability result:

- Made a loss
- Break-even (neither profit nor loss)
- Under \$10,000
- 10,000 - \$50,000
- \$51,000 to 100,000
- \$101,000 to \$500,000
- \$501,000 to \$999,000
- \$1m - 5m
- Over \$5m

7. Do you currently have a network of entrepreneurial friends/colleagues with whom to discuss your excitement and concerns related to your entrepreneurial vision?

- Not at all
- To some extent
- To a major extent

8. What is your age group?

- Under 20 years
- 20 to 25 yrs
- 26 to 30 yrs
- 31 to 35 yrs
- 36 to 40 yrs
- 41 to 45 yrs
- 46 to 50 yrs
- 51 to 55 yrs
- 56 to 60 yrs
- above 60 yrs

9. Please indicate your relationship status:

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- De facto relationship
- Other (please specify)

10. Do you have children?

- No
- About to have a child
- Have a child / children living at home
- Have a child / children not living at home

11. What is your highest level of formal education?

- Secondary school certificate
- TAFE qualification or formal Trade certificate
- Undergraduate degree
- Postgraduate diploma or certificate
- Postgraduate degree
- Other (please specify)

SECTION B) ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

The following statements relate to a range of entrepreneurial and influencing/leading behaviours. Please read through the statements for each question topic and indicate to what extent you agree with each statement. If you are not currently influencing/leading people, please respond how you would behave if you were.

1. Entrepreneurial and leading/influencing behaviour

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I seek continuous performance improvement in my venture/organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I set high performance expectations for the development of my business idea/venture or the organisation I work in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I lead/influence people I set task goals according to their ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I set creative plans for my venture/business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend time on new strategies for venture/business development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm good at anticipating possible future events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think ahead about new developments that will occur in the sector my venture/business is active in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When leading/influencing others, I undertake risks to reduce the uncertainty in the work of people I lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When leading/influencing others, I promote an environment where risk taking is encouraged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
When leading/influencing others, I negotiate effectively to eliminate the obstacles for those I lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When leading/influencing others, I show empathy towards the people I lead/influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I infuse enthusiasm in others for their ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I inspire positive emotions, beliefs, values and behaviours of people I lead/influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I inspire passion for new idea generation and encourage others to exploit their ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I were to, or when I recruit people, I prefer recruiting team-oriented staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If/when my venture is going through change, I motivate others to commit to the goals of this change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prioritise tasks required for my venture's success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicate effectively with people I lead/influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen and act upon complaints from customers/clients	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I bring people/things together when pursuing a goal of the venture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make decisions firmly and quickly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I specify the business scope of the venture to suggest what can or cannot be done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I demonstrate the ability to manage time effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I adjust my planning approach when new opportunities arise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively identify new business opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively develop new business opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively pursue new business opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have insight into the market and business competition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I point out the competition's weaknesses and how we could exploit them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often come up with radical improvement ideas for the products/services my venture is selling/providing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I encourage people I lead/influence to be innovative in how they work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I allot time to find ways to improve business innovation and opportunity recognition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I create a climate that encourages continuous innovation and opportunity recognition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I create an environment where others feel free to try new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I show awareness of others' strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek continuous self-improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I lead/ influence others by serving as a role model	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I focus on helping others grow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I update those I lead/influence, on new trends and methods to improve their learning and achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Entrepreneurial Passion

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Nurturing a new venture/business/initiative through its emerging success is enjoyable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is exciting to identify unmet market needs and ways to fill the market gap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inventing new solutions to problems is an important part of who I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assembling the right people to work with me or for my business is exciting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think of myself as someone who develops initiatives/ventures/projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Growth Intention

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
My intention is to grow my venture as large as possible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Attitude

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
It is important to me to grow my business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am pleased to see my business profitability grow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Subjective norms

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Those closest to me are supportive of me wanting to grow my venture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most entrepreneurs whom I know are likely to grow their business in the next few years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the entrepreneurs like me, have grown their businesses within 5 years of establishing their venture/business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people whose opinions I value would approve of growing my business in the next 5 years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Perceived Behavioral Control

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
If I wanted to, I could grow my venture/business in the next 5 years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growing my business in the next 5 years is completely up to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growing my businesses in the next 5 years will be difficult because there's a lot that I cannot control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PLEASE NOTE

After submitting the survey you will be redirected to a webpage to download your complimentary benefit "Taking Your Business Vision and Making it Real Toolkit". If you experience any problems, please contact Retha Wiesner at retha.wiesner@usq.edu.au If you are willing to participate in a research interview with the project team to further contribute to this research please email Retha Wiesner at retha.wiesner@usq.edu.au to indicate your willingness.

Thank you VERY MUCH for your participation!!

Please click DONE to submit your survey

Appendix C: Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
<30	4	4.1
30-40	14	14.3
40-50	40	40.8
50-60	24	24.5
60+	16	16.3
Marital status		
Single	14	14.6
Married	63	65.6
Divorced	6	6.3
De facto relationship	13	13.5
Have children		
No	16	16.5
Have a child (living at home)	54	55.7
Have a child (not living at home)	27	27.8
Formal Education		
Secondary school certificate	15	15.2
TAFE qualification or formal Trade certificate	13	13.1
Undergraduate degree	19	19.2
Postgraduate diploma or certificate	14	14.1
Postgraduate degree and above	38	38.4

Table 2: Business-Related Characteristics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Sole owner		
Yes	76	78.4
No	21	21.6
Family business		
Yes	36	36.7
No	62	63.3
No of employees		
0 (just the owner)	75	75.8
1 to 3	14	14.1
more than 3	10	10.1
Age of business		
less than 1 Year	31	31.3
1-3 years	24	24.2
More than 3 years	44	44.4
Entrepreneurial Network		
Not at all	22	22.2
To some extent	70	70.7
To a major extent	7	7.1
Venture profitability (last financial year)		
Made a loss	23	25.6
Break-even (neither profit nor loss)	34	37.8
Made a Profit	33	36.7

Table 3: Entrepreneurial leadership Identity

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly agree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D.
Developing and nurturing a venture/business is an important part of who I am	1(1)	1(1)	12(12.1)	52(52.5)	33(33.3)	4.2	4.0	0.7
I think of myself as an entrepreneur	1(1)	6(6.1)	22(22.2)	45(45.5)	25(25.3)	3.9	4.0	0.9
I think of myself as a leader	1(1)	4(4)	14(14.1)	57(57.6)	23(23.2)	4.0	4.0	0.8
When I describe myself, I would include the word leader	1(1)	4(4)	35(35.4)	49(49.5)	10(10.1)	3.6	4.0	0.8

Table 4: Entrepreneurial Passion

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly agree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D.
Nurturing a new venture/business/initiative through its emerging success is enjoyable	1(1)	1(1)	13(13.1)	41(41.4)	43(43.4)	4.3	4.0	0.8
It is exciting to identify unmet market gap	1(1)	9(9.1)	17(17.2)	51(51.5)	21(21.2)	3.8	4.0	0.9
Inventing new solutions to problems is an important of who I am	2(2)	3(3)	28(28.3)	51(51.5)	15(15.2)	3.7	4.0	0.8
Assembling the right people to work with me or my business is exciting	1(1)	1(1)	19(19.2)	43(43.4)	35(35.4)	4.1	4.0	0.8

Table 5: Attitude

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly agree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D.
It is important to me to grow my business	1(1)	3(3)	9(9.1)	53(53.5)	33(33.3)	4.2	4.0	0.8
I am pleased to see my business profitability grow	1(1)	1(1)	8(8.1)	39(39.4)	50(50.5)	4.4	5.0	0.8

Table 6: Subjective Norms

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly agree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D.
Those closest to me are supportive of me wanting to grow my venture	0(0)	6(6.1)	19(19.2)	58(58.6)	16(16.2)	3.8	4.0	0.8
Being too ambitious is often perceived poorly by those closest to me	12(12.1)	33(33.3)	20(20.2)	31(31.3)	3(3)	2.8	3.0	1.1
Most entrepreneurs whom I know are likely to grow their business in the next few years	1(1)	1(1)	26(26.3)	54(54.5)	17(17.2)	2.9	3.0	0.7
Most of the entrepreneurs like me, have grown their businesses within 5 years of establishing their venture/business	1(1)	1(1)	28(28.3)	54(54.5)	15(15.2)	2.8	3.0	0.7
Most people whose opinions I value would approve of growing my business in the next 5 years	1(1)	2(2)	8(8.1)	54(54.5)	34(34.3)	3.2	3.0	0.7

Table 7: Perceived Behavioural Control

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D.
If I wanted to, I could grow my venture/business in the next 5 years	1(1)	2(2)	10(10.1)	46(46.5)	40(40.4)	4.2	4.0	0.8
Growing my business in the next 5 years is completely up to me	1(1)	2(2)	11(11.1)	41(41.4)	44(44.4)	4.3	4.0	0.8
Growing my businesses in the next 5 years will be difficult because there's a lot that I cannot control	1(1)	2(2)	19(19.2)	55(55.6)	22(22.2)	4.0	4.0	0.8
COVID has made me doubt my ability to grow my business/venture	18(18.2)	39(39.4)	23(23.2)	11(11.1)	8(8.1)	2.5	2.0	1.1

Table 8: Venture Growth Intentions

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly agree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D.
My intention is to grow my venture as large as possible	1(1)	2(2)	9(9.1)	49(49.5)	38(38.4)	4.2	4.0	0.8

Table 9: Entrepreneurial leadership

	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Neutral f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly agree f (%)	Mean	Median	S.D
Framing challenges								
I seek continuous performance improvement in my venture/organisation	2(2)	0(0)	5(5.1)	31(31.3)	61(61.6)	4.5	5.0	0.8
I set high performance expectations for the development of my business idea/venture or the organisation I work in	0(0)	4(4)	5(5.1)	36(36.4)	54(54.5)	4.4	5.0	0.8
When I lead/influence people I set task goals according to their ability	0(0)	5(5.1)	15(15.2)	39(39.4)	40(40.4)	4.2	4.0	0.9
I set creative plans for my venture/business	0(0)	4(4)	22(22.2)	40(40.4)	33(33.3)	4.0	4.0	0.8
I spend time on new strategies for venture/business development	0(0)	4(4)	29(29.3)	38(38.4)	28(28.3)	3.9	4.0	0.9
Absorbing uncertainty								
I'm good at anticipating possible future events	0(0)	7(7.1)	32(32.3)	41(41.4)	19(19.2)	3.7	4.0	0.9
I think ahead about new developments that will occur in the sector my venture/business is active in	1(1)	9(9.1)	18(18.2)	48(48.5)	23(23.2)	3.8	4.0	0.9
When leading /influencing others, I undertake risks to reduce the uncertainty in the work of people I lead	0(0)	1(1)	50(50.5)	27(27.3)	21(21.2)	3.7	3.0	0.8
When leading/influencing others, I promote an environment where risk taking is encouraged.	2(2)	16(16.2)	34(34.3)	36(36.4)	11(11.1)	3.4	3.0	1.0
Underwriting								

When leading/influencing others, I negotiate effectively to eliminate the obstacles for those I lead	0(0)	0(0)	25(25.3)	54(54.5)	18(18.2)	3.9	4.0	0.7
When leading/influencing others, I show empathy towards the people I lead/influence	0(0)	0(0)	9(9.1)	35(35.4)	55(55.6)	4.5	5.0	0.7
I infuse enthusiasm in others for their ideas	0(0)	0(0)	14(14.1)	36(36.4)	49(49.5)	4.4	4.0	0.7
I inspire positive emotions, beliefs, values and behaviours of people I lead/influence	0(0)	0(0)	8(8.1)	37(37.4)	54(54.5)	4.5	5.0	0.6
I inspire passion for new idea generation and encourage others to exploit their ideas	0(0)	2(2)	14(14.1)	36(36.4)	47(47.5)	4.3	4.0	0.8
Building commitment								
If I were to, or when I recruit people, I prefer recruiting team-oriented staff	0(0)	0(0)	8(8.1)	42(42.4)	49(49.5)	4.4	4.0	0.6
If/when my venture is going through change, I motivate others to commit to the goals of this change	0(0)	0(0)	19(19.2)	44(44.4)	36(36.4)	4.2	4.0	0.7
I prioritise tasks required for my venture's success	0(0)	1(1)	22(22.2)	52(52.5)	24(24.2)	4.0	4.0	0.7
I communicate effectively with people I lead/influence	0(0)	0(0)	18(18.2)	47(47.5)	34(34.3)	4.2	4.0	0.7
I listen and act upon complaints from customers/clients	0(0)	0(0)	9(9.1)	35(35.4)	54(54.5)	4.5	5.0	0.7
Defining gravity								
I bring people/things together when pursuing a goal of the venture	0(0)	0(0)	14(14.1)	47(47.5)	38(38.4)	4.2	4.0	0.7
I make decisions firmly and quickly	1(1)	17(17.2)	32(32.3)	34(34.3)	15(15.2)	3.5	3.0	1.0

I specify the business scope of the venture to suggest what can or cannot be done	1(1)	3(3)	35(35.4)	41(41.4)	19(19.2)	3.7	4.0	0.8
I demonstrate the ability to manage time effectively	0(0)	8(8.1)	22(22.2)	45(45.5)	24(24.2)	3.9	4.0	0.9
Opportunity identification and exploitation								
I adjust my planning approach when new opportunities arise	0(0)	1(1)	16(16.2)	58(58.6)	24(24.2)	4.1	4.0	0.7
I actively identify new business opportunities	0(0)	4(4)	16(16.2)	49(49.5)	30(30.3)	4.1	4.0	0.8
I actively develop new business opportunities	0(0)	10(10.1)	21(21.2)	43(43.4)	25(25.3)	3.8	4.0	0.9
I actively pursue new business opportunities	0(0)	16(16.2)	29(29.3)	36(36.4)	18(18.2)	3.6	4.0	1.0
I have insight into the market and business competition	3(3)	8(8.1)	26(26.3)	52(52.5)	10(10.1)	3.6	4.0	0.9
I point out the competition's weaknesses and how we could exploit them	10(10.1)	32(32.3)	39(39.4)	11(11.1)	7(7.1)	2.7	3.0	1.0
I often come up with radical improvement ideas for the products/services my venture is selling/providing	4(4)	22(22.2)	32(32.3)	34(34.3)	7(7.1)	3.2	3.0	1.0
I encourage people I lead/influence to be innovative in how they work	0(0)	1(1)	32(32.3)	37(37.4)	29(29.3)	3.9	4.0	0.8
I allot time to find ways to improve business innovation and opportunity recognition	3(3)	19(19.2)	40(40.4)	28(28.3)	9(9.1)	3.2	3.0	1.0
I create a climate that encourages continuous innovation and opportunity recognition	0(0)	4(4)	34(34.3)	36(36.4)	25(25.3)	3.8	4.0	0.9

I create an environment where others feel free to try new things	0(0)	0(0)	29(29.3)	38(38.4)	32(32.3)	4.0	4.0	0.8
Orientation towards learning								
I show awareness of others' strengths and weaknesses	0(0)	3(3)	19(19.2)	54(54.5)	23(23.2)	4.0	4.0	0.7
I seek continuous self-improvement	0(0)	0(0)	4(4)	37(37.4)	58(58.6)	4.5	5.0	0.6
I lead/ influence others by serving as a role model	0(0)	1(1)	15(15.2)	41(41.4)	42(42.4)	4.3	4.0	0.7
I focus on helping others grow	0(0)	0(0)	9(9.1)	47(47.5)	43(43.4)	4.3	4.0	0.6
I update those I lead/influence, on new trends and methods to improve their learning and achievement	0(0)	2(2)	30(30.3)	34(34.3)	33(33.3)	4.0	4.0	0.8
